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the cupcake cookbook

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Cupcakes Forever

Food writers love telling America that the cupcake trend is over. The headlines have been haunting us for years: "The Rise and Fall of the Cupcake," "The Gourmet Cupcake Trend Is Officially Dead," "RIP Cupcakes." Often, to drive home the point, trend reporters will say that another dessert has assumed the cupcake's position as our most beloved handheld treat: Doughnuts are the new cupcake! Cake pops are the new cupcake! Macarons are the new cupcake!

Hold it right there. Can you imagine making macarons for a bake sale? I'd be better off just handing over a wad of cash because it would take me 25 batches to produce a single, properly executed macaron. Same for doughnuts. And I can't make a decent-looking cake pop to save my life. Cupcakes, though, I can handle those.

We all can—which is why we put together this special edition, the most comprehensive collection of cupcake recipes ever assembled from the Food Network test kitchen. It's a lot, but we're betting on cupcakes being the new cupcake.

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Chocolate-Strawberry cupcakes

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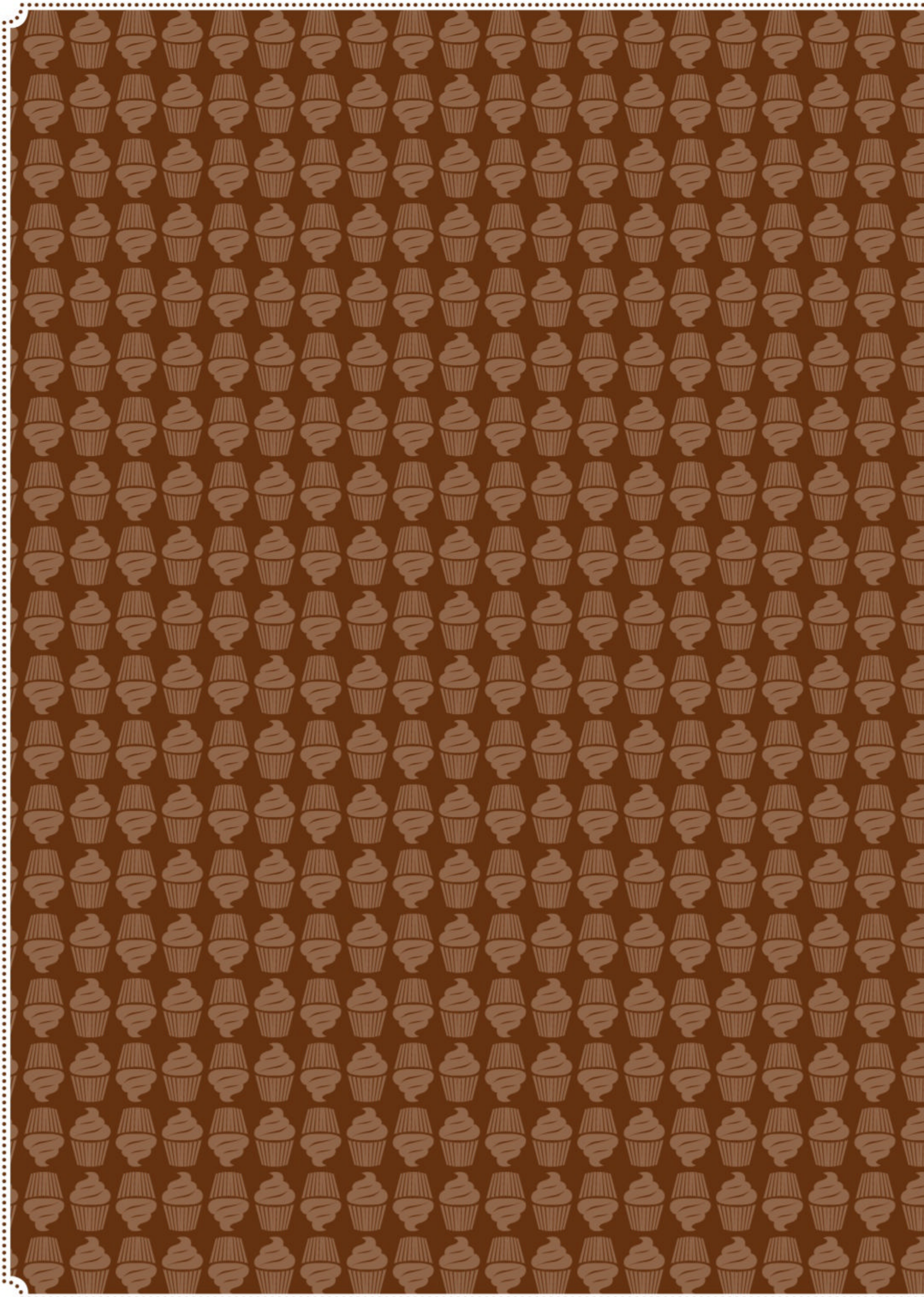


chocolate cupcakes

CLASSIC CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	cup all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
¾	cup milk
½	cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1	cup granulated sugar
¾	cup vegetable oil
1	large egg
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
2	cups confectioners' sugar
4	ounces melted semisweet chocolate
2	tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
2	tablespoons milk
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Pulse the butter, confectioners' sugar, melted chocolate, cocoa powder, milk and vanilla in a food processor until smooth. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes.

CANNOLI CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	cup all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
¾	cup milk
½	cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1	cup granulated sugar
¾	cup vegetable oil
1	large egg
2	tablespoons Marsala wine
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½	teaspoon pure almond extract

FOR THE FROSTING

4	tablespoons butter, at room temperature
6	ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
⅓	cup ricotta cheese
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt	
2	cups confectioners' sugar
Mini chocolate chips, chopped pistachios and broken waffle cookies, for topping	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg, Marsala and both extracts until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, ricotta, vanilla and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with chocolate chips, pistachios and cookie pieces.

MINI CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES WITH PEANUT BUTTER FROSTING

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 24

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, cut into pieces
½	cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
¼	cup water
1⅓	cups packed dark brown sugar
1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
¼	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
⅓	cup buttermilk
1	large egg, at room temperature
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE TOPPING

½	cup heavy cream
1	10-ounce bag peanut butter chips

FOR THE GLAZE

1	tablespoon unsalted butter
6	ounces milk chocolate, finely chopped
3	tablespoons hot water

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350° (use the convection setting if available). Line a 24-cup mini-muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Combine the butter, cocoa powder and water in a microwave-safe bowl; cover and microwave until the butter melts, about 2 minutes. Whisk to combine, then whisk in the brown sugar.

2. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a large bowl. Whisk in the warm cocoa mixture. In another bowl, whisk the buttermilk, egg and vanilla; stir into the batter until just combined (don't overmix).

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the topping: Bring the heavy cream to a simmer in a small saucepan, then pour over the peanut butter chips in a bowl and let stand until the chips melt, about 5 minutes. Whisk until smooth. Refrigerate until the topping is set, about 10 minutes. Beat with a mixer until fluffy. Transfer to a pastry bag with a 1-inch round tip and pipe peaks onto each cupcake. Place in the freezer while you make the glaze.

5. Make the glaze: Put the butter, chocolate and hot water in a small microwave-safe bowl; cover and microwave on 50 percent power until the chocolate melts, about 2 minutes. Whisk until smooth. Dip the frozen peaks of each cupcake into the glaze, letting the excess drip off. Refrigerate until set, about 5 minutes.

Chocolate Egg Cream cupcakes

CHOCOLATE EGG CREAM CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 50 min | TOTAL: 1 hr 20 min
MAKES: 6

FOR THE CUPCAKES
¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
⅓ cup water
¼ cup chocolate syrup
⅔ cup all-purpose flour
⅓ cup granulated sugar
¼ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
2 tablespoons whole milk
½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
1 ounce milk chocolate, chopped
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces, at room temperature
½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
2 cups confectioners' sugar
¼ cup whole milk
2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
2 pinches of salt
2 tablespoons malted milk powder
Small pretzel rods, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 6-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the cocoa powder with the hot water in a medium bowl. Whisk in the chocolate syrup; let cool slightly. In a large bowl, whisk the flour, granulated sugar, baking soda, baking powder and salt.
2. Whisk the vegetable oil, egg, milk and vanilla into the cocoa mixture until smooth. Fold into the flour mixture.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 10 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Microwave the chocolate in 30-second intervals, stirring, until melted; let cool. Beat the butter, vanilla and confectioners' sugar with a mixer on medium-high speed until fluffy. Add 3 tablespoons milk; beat until smooth, 3 minutes. Remove half of the frosting to a separate bowl; beat in the cocoa powder, melted chocolate and a pinch of salt until fluffy, 2 minutes. Mix the remaining 1 tablespoon milk and the malted milk powder in a cup, then add to the plain frosting with a pinch of salt; beat until fluffy, 2 minutes. Refrigerate to firm up, if needed.
5. Put the frostings in 2 separate resealable plastic bags; snip a corner of each. Put the bags side by side in a large resealable plastic bag and snip a corner. Pipe the swirled frosting on the cupcakes. Top with pretzel rods.

SUNDAE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr 20 min | TOTAL: 2 hr
MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 stick unsalted butter, cut into pieces
2 ounces unsweetened chocolate, chopped
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
¾ cup all-purpose flour
¼ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ cup whole milk
1 banana, chopped
¼ cup salted roasted peanuts, chopped

FOR THE FROSTING
2½ sticks unsalted butter, at room temperature
2½ cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
1½ teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 tablespoons whole milk
2 sugar ice cream cones, crushed

FOR THE CHOCOLATE SHELL
6 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
1½ tablespoons coconut oil
Rainbow sprinkles, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Combine the butter and chocolate in a large microwave-safe bowl; microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring, until melted and smooth. Let cool slightly, then whisk in the granulated sugar and eggs until smooth. Whisk in the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt until just combined. Add the milk and whisk until smooth, then stir in the banana and peanuts.
2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
3. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until combined. Add the vanilla and milk; increase the speed to medium high and beat until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add the crushed sugar cones and beat 1 more minute. Transfer to a piping bag fitted with a large star tip. Arrange the cupcakes on a baking sheet and pipe tall swirls of frosting onto the cupcakes. Refrigerate the cupcakes until the frosting is firm, about 20 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, make the chocolate shell: Combine the chocolate and coconut oil in a microwave-safe bowl; microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring, until melted and smooth. Let cool slightly, then pour into a short wide drinking glass for dunking the cupcakes. One at a time, turn each cupcake upside down and dunk the frosted tops in the melted chocolate; rotate to coat and let the excess drip off. Return to the baking sheet and top with sprinkles while the chocolate is still wet. Refrigerate until set, at least 30 minutes or overnight.

MALTED MILK CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ cup malted milk powder
¾ cup milk
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
½ cup granulated sugar
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1½ cups confectioners' sugar
⅓ cup malted milk powder
4 ounces milk chocolate, melted
2 tablespoons milk
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Chopped malted milk balls, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and malted milk powder in a medium bowl.
2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Combine the butter, confectioners' sugar, malted milk powder, melted chocolate, milk and vanilla in a food processor. Pulse until smooth.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with chopped malted milk balls.

CHIPOTLE-BACON CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon chipotle chile powder
¾ cup milk
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 cup granulated sugar
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
4 slices bacon, cooked and chopped, plus more for topping

FOR THE FROSTING
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon chipotle chile powder
Pinch of salt
2 cups confectioners' sugar

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Whisk the flour, baking soda, salt and chile powder in a medium bowl.
2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined. Fold in the bacon.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, vanilla, chile powder and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with more bacon.

CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES WITH DOUBLE CHOCOLATE CURLS

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1 hr 40 min | MAKES: 30

FOR THE CUPCAKES
2 cups all-purpose flour
1¾ cups granulated sugar
¼ cup packed light brown sugar
¾ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1½ teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon baking powder
3 large eggs
1 cup whole milk
½ cup vegetable oil
1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
¼ cup hot water

FOR THE CHOCOLATE CURLS
Cooking spray
3 ounces white chocolate, chopped
3 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped

FOR THE FROSTING
2 8-ounce packages cream cheese, at room temperature
3 sticks unsalted butter, at room temperature
¼ teaspoon salt
3½ cups confectioners' sugar
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line 30 muffin cups with paper or foil liners. Mix the flour, granulated sugar, brown sugar, cocoa powder, baking soda, salt and baking powder in a large bowl with a mixer on low speed until combined. Add the eggs, milk, vegetable oil, vinegar and vanilla. Increase the speed to medium and beat until smooth, about 2 minutes. Beat in the hot water until smooth.

2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups, filling them about halfway. Tap the pans against the counter to remove any air bubbles. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to racks and let cool 5 minutes in the pans, then remove the cupcakes to the racks to cool completely.

3. Meanwhile, make the chocolate curls: Coat a mini loaf pan or other small dish with cooking spray. Melt the white chocolate in the microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring, until smooth, then pour into the prepared pan. Refrigerate until just beginning to set, about 5 minutes. Melt the semisweet chocolate in the microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring, until smooth, then pour over the white chocolate. Refrigerate until both layers are firm, about 30 minutes. Remove the layered chocolate from the dish and let sit at room temperature, 10 minutes. Using a vegetable peeler, shave from the side to create brown-and-white curls.

4. Make the frosting: Beat the cream cheese, butter and salt in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Reduce the speed to medium low and gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar until smooth, then beat in the vanilla. Increase the speed to medium high and beat until thick and fluffy, about 2 minutes.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with the chocolate curls.

CHOCOLATE-BACON CUPCAKES WITH DULCE DE LECHE FROSTING

ACTIVE: 50 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CANDIED BACON
½ cup packed light brown sugar
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
2 teaspoons unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
12 slices bacon, cut in half

FOR THE CUPCAKES
5 tablespoons vegetable oil
¼ cup brewed espresso or coffee
¼ cup packed light brown sugar
⅓ cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
4 ounces milk chocolate, chopped
¾ cup all-purpose flour
½ cup granulated sugar
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon fine salt
¼ cup buttermilk
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
1 cup jarred dulce de leche
8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Flaky sea salt, for topping

1. Make the candied bacon: Preheat the oven to 350° and set a rack on a foil-lined baking sheet. Whisk the brown sugar, granulated sugar and cocoa powder in a medium bowl. Toss the bacon in the sugar mixture until coated, then arrange on the rack in a single layer. Bake until dark brown, 15 to 20 minutes. Let cool, then transfer to a plate and pat dry with paper towels. Chop 6 pieces of the bacon; set aside.

2. Meanwhile, make the cupcakes: Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Combine the vegetable oil, espresso, brown sugar, cocoa powder and chocolate in a large microwave-safe bowl and microwave until hot, about 2 minutes. Whisk until smooth, then set aside to cool, about 15 minutes.

3. Whisk the flour, granulated sugar, baking soda and fine salt in a medium bowl. Add the buttermilk, eggs and vanilla to the cooled chocolate mixture and whisk until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until combined.

4. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Sprinkle with the chopped bacon. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 10 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

5. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the dulce de leche, cream cheese and vanilla in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until combined. Transfer to a pastry bag fitted with a large star tip; refrigerate 30 minutes.

6. Pipe the frosting onto the cupcakes. Break the remaining candied bacon into pieces. Sprinkle the bacon and flaky salt on the cupcakes.

ROOT BEER FLOAT CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup milk
½ cup root beer
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 cup granulated sugar
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 tablespoons root beer
12 root beer candies

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a bowl.
2. Heat the milk and root beer in a small saucepan over medium heat until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Add the vanilla and beat on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the root beer until fluffy, 1 more minute.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with the root beer candies.

CHOCOLATE-HAZELNUT CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
¼ cup roasted hazelnuts, finely ground
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
¾ cup milk
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 cup granulated sugar
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup confectioners' sugar
½ cup chocolate-hazelnut spread
2 tablespoons milk
Chopped hazelnuts, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, ground hazelnuts, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar, chocolate-hazelnut spread and milk in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until creamy.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with chopped hazelnuts.

LOW-FAT CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES WITH MERINGUE FROSTING

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
Cooking spray
½ cup loosely packed pitted prunes
¾ cup hot water
1 cup all-purpose flour
⅓ cup whole-wheat flour
⅓ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ cup packed light brown sugar
2 large eggs
½ cup low-fat plain Greek yogurt
½ cup vegetable oil
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
3 large egg whites
⅓ cup granulated sugar
⅛ teaspoon cream of tartar
Pinch of salt
2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
¼ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon finely grated orange zest (optional)

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners; lightly spray the liners with cooking spray. Soak the prunes in a bowl with the hot water until soft, about 10 minutes. Pour into a blender and puree until smooth.
2. Whisk the all-purpose flour, whole-wheat flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon in a large bowl. In another bowl, whisk the prune puree, brown sugar, eggs, yogurt, vegetable oil and vanilla. Fold the wet ingredients into the dry ingredients until just combined (it's fine if there are a few lumps).
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 10 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Whisk the egg whites, granulated sugar, cream of tartar and salt in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water until the sugar dissolves, 1 to 2 minutes (do not let the bowl touch the water). Remove the bowl from the pan. Transfer the egg white mixture to a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment; beat on medium-high speed until stiff peaks form, 3 to 5 minutes. Sift in the cocoa powder and add the vanilla and orange zest; beat to combine. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes.

MINT CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES ▶

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 2 hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
¾ cup milk
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
¾ cup granulated sugar
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
⅓ cup chopped mint chocolates

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, melted
1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
3 cups confectioners' sugar
1½ cups marshmallow cream
¼ cup milk
Nonpareils and/or coarse sugar, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl. Heat the milk in a small saucepan until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg, vanilla, flour mixture and mint chocolates.
2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
3. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the melted butter and cocoa powder in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until well combined, about 2 minutes. Reduce the speed to low; beat in the confectioners' sugar, marshmallow cream and milk until combined. Increase the speed to high and beat until fluffy, about 4 more minutes. Set aside at room temperature until thickened, about 1 hour.
4. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with nonpareils and/or coarse sugar.

Mint Chocolate cupcakes

CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES WITH GINGER

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	cup all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
¾	cup milk
½	cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1	cup granulated sugar
¾	cup vegetable oil
1	large egg
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

1	8-ounce package cream cheese, at room temperature
6	tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup confectioners' sugar
1	teaspoon lemon zest
½	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Chopped crystallized ginger, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the cream cheese, butter, confectioners' sugar, lemon zest and vanilla with a mixer on medium speed until fluffy, about 3 minutes.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with crystallized ginger.

SNACK ATTACK CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1 hr 15 min | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	cup all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
¾	cup milk
½	cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1	cup granulated sugar
¾	cup vegetable oil
1	large egg
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½	cup crushed potato chips, plus more for topping
½	cup crushed chocolate-covered pretzels, plus more for topping

FOR THE FROSTING

1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
2	cups confectioners' sugar
4	ounces semisweet chocolate, melted
2	tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
2	tablespoons milk
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350˚. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Heat the milk until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined. Fold in the potato chips and pretzels.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Pulse the butter, confectioners' sugar, melted chocolate, cocoa powder, milk and vanilla in a food processor until smooth.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with more crushed potato chips and pretzels.

CHOCOLATE-PEANUT BUTTER CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	cup all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
¾	cup milk
½	cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1	cup granulated sugar
¾	cup vegetable oil
1	large egg
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1	cup peanut butter chips, plus more for topping

FOR THE FROSTING

1	stick butter, at room temperature
2	cups confectioners' sugar
4	ounces semisweet chocolate, melted
2	tablespoons creamy peanut butter
2	tablespoons milk
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350˚. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with nonstick liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined. Fold in the peanut butter chips.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Pulse the butter, confectioners' sugar, melted chocolate, peanut butter, milk and vanilla in a food processor until smooth.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with more peanut butter chips.

CHOCOLATE–TOASTED MARSHMALLOW CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	cup all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
¾	cup milk
½	cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1	cup sugar
¾	cup vegetable oil
1	large egg
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

3	large egg whites
⅔	cup sugar
⅛	teaspoon cream of tartar
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Whisk the egg whites, sugar and cream of tartar in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of simmering water until warm (do not let the bottom of the bowl touch the water). Remove the bowl from the pan and beat with a mixer until stiff glossy peaks form; beat in the vanilla.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Brown with a kitchen torch.

CHOCOLATE–PEANUT BRITTLE CUPCAKES ▶

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 24

FOR THE CUPCAKES

3	sticks unsalted butter, cut into pieces
1	cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
¾	cup water
3¼	cups packed dark brown sugar
3	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
¾	teaspoon salt
1¼	cups buttermilk
2	large eggs, at room temperature
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract

FOR THE BRITTLE

½	cup granulated sugar
¼	cup creamy peanut butter
¼	cup butterscotch chips

FOR THE FROSTING

1	cup heavy cream
2	10-ounce bags peanut butter chips

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350° (use the convection setting if available). Line two 12-cup muffin pans with paper or foil liners. Put the butter, cocoa powder and water in a microwave-safe bowl, cover with plastic wrap and microwave until the butter melts, about 2 minutes. Whisk in the brown sugar.
2. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a large bowl. Whisk in the warm cocoa mixture. In another bowl, beat the buttermilk, eggs and vanilla; stir into the batter until just combined (don't overmix).
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the cupcakes are slightly domed and spring back when pressed, 25 to 30 minutes. Transfer to racks and let cool 10 minutes in the pans, then remove the cupcakes to the racks to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the brittle: Line a baking sheet with a silicone mat or parchment paper. Place the granulated sugar in a small saucepan over medium-high heat, bring to a boil and cook, swirling the pan but not stirring, until the sugar turns amber. Remove from the heat; stir in the peanut butter and butterscotch chips until smooth. Immediately pour the mixture onto the prepared baking sheet, smooth into a thin layer with a spatula and let cool. Break the brittle into pieces, place in a resealable plastic bag and crush with a rolling pin.
5. Make the frosting: Bring the heavy cream to a simmer in a small saucepan. Remove from the heat, add the peanut butter chips and let stand about 5 minutes. Whisk until smooth. Place the pan over a bowl of ice, stirring occasionally, until the frosting is spreadable, about 10 minutes.
6. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Sprinkle the brittle on top.

Chocolate–Peanut Brittle cupcakes

MINI CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES WITH EARL GREY FROSTING

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 48

FOR THE CUPCAKES

- **6 ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped**
- **2 sticks unsalted butter, cut into pieces**
- **1½ cups sugar**
- **¾ cup cake flour**
- **½ teaspoon salt**
- **4 large eggs**
- **½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

FOR THE FROSTING

- **1 cup sugar**
- **4 large egg whites**
- **1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice**
- **Pinch of salt**
- **2 bags Earl Grey tea**

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350˚. Line two 24-cup mini-muffin pans with paper or foil liners. Melt the chocolate and butter in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water (do not let the bowl touch the water). Whisk until smooth, then remove the bowl; keep the water simmering in the saucepan. In another bowl, whisk the sugar, flour and salt; mix into the melted chocolate. Whisk in the eggs, one at a time, then whisk in the vanilla until smooth.

2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 15 to 18 minutes. Transfer to racks and let cool 5 minutes in the pans, then remove the cupcakes to the racks to cool completely.

3. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Whisk the sugar, egg whites, lemon juice and salt by hand in the bowl of a stand mixer. Open the tea bags and add the loose tea to the bowl, then set the bowl over the saucepan of simmering water and whisk until the mixture is hot and the sugar dissolves, about 2 minutes. Transfer the bowl to the stand mixer and beat with the whisk attachment on medium-high speed until the mixture holds stiff peaks, about 5 minutes. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes.

MEXICAN HOT CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 45 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1 cup all-purpose flour
¼ cup almond flour
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
Pinch of cayenne
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
¾ cup milk
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 cup granulated sugar
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
½ cup packed light brown sugar
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt
1 cup confectioners' sugar
Ground cinnamon and grated chocolate, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk both flours, the cinnamon, cayenne, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, brown sugar, vanilla and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar on medium low until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Sprinkle with cinnamon and grated chocolate.

MINT PATTY CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 2 hr | MAKES: 24

FOR THE CUPCAKES

3 sticks unsalted butter, cut into pieces
1 cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
¾ cup water
3¼ cups packed dark brown sugar
3 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
¾ teaspoon salt
1¼ cups buttermilk
2 large eggs, at room temperature
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract

FOR THE TOPPINGS

4 cups confectioners' sugar
1 cup light corn syrup
¼ cup vegetable shortening or cocoa butter, softened
2 teaspoons peppermint extract
8 ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
1½ tablespoons unsalted butter
¼ cup water

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line two 12-cup muffin pans with paper or foil liners. Put the butter, cocoa powder and water in a medium microwave-safe bowl, cover with plastic wrap and microwave until the butter melts, about 2 minutes. Whisk to combine, then whisk in the brown sugar.
2. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a large bowl. Whisk in the warm cocoa mixture. In another bowl, whisk the buttermilk, eggs and vanilla; stir into the batter until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 30 to 35 minutes. Transfer to racks and let cool 10 minutes in the pans, then remove the cupcakes to the racks to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the peppermint topping: Beat the confectioners' sugar, ½ cup corn syrup, the shortening and peppermint extract with a mixer until a paste forms. Gather into a ball, then roll out until ¼ inch thick between 2 sheets of parchment (microwave to soften if necessary). Use a 2½-inch round cutter to cut into disks; reroll the scraps. Place a peppermint disk on top of each cupcake.
5. Make the chocolate glaze: Put the chocolate, remaining ½ cup corn syrup, the butter and water in a microwave-safe bowl, cover with plastic wrap and microwave until the chocolate melts, 2 minutes. Whisk to combine, then let cool slightly. Spread the glaze over the peppermint topping. Refrigerate until set, at least 20 minutes. Serve cold.

MINI CANDY CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 24

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, cut into pieces
½ cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
¼ cup water
1⅓ cups packed dark brown sugar
1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
⅓ cup buttermilk
1 large egg, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 tablespoons milk
Assorted candies, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350° (use the convection setting if available). Line a 24-cup mini-muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Combine the butter, cocoa powder and water in a microwave-safe bowl, cover and microwave until the butter melts, about 2 minutes. Whisk to combine, then whisk in the brown sugar.
2. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a large bowl. Whisk in the warm cocoa mixture. In another bowl, whisk the buttermilk, egg and vanilla; stir into the batter until just combined (don't overmix).
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, about 20 minutes. Transfer to racks and let cool 5 minutes in the pans, then remove the cupcakes to the racks to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, 1 more minute.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with assorted candies.

TRIPLE CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
¾ cup milk
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 cup sugar
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
¾ cup white chocolate chips

FOR THE GLAZE
½ cup heavy cream
4 ounces milk chocolate, chopped

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with nonstick liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined. Fold in the white chocolate chips.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the glaze: Put the heavy cream in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave until hot. Pour over the milk chocolate in a small bowl. Let cool 5 minutes, then whisk until smooth and cool to the touch. Spoon over the cupcakes.

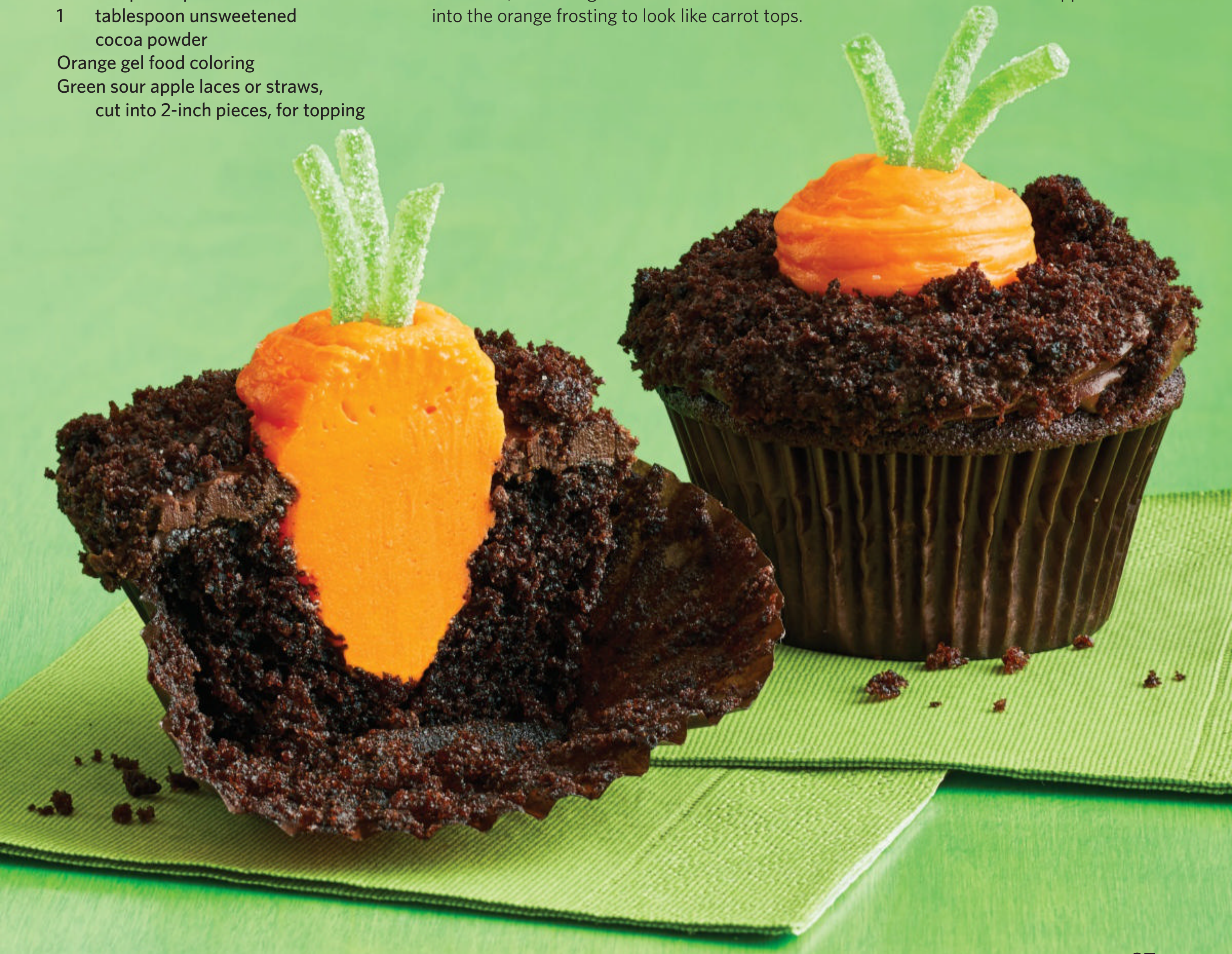
SPROUTING-CARROT CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
¾ cup whole milk
1 cup granulated sugar
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
2 ounces unsweetened chocolate, chopped
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
2 tablespoons heavy cream
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
Orange gel food coloring
Green sour apple laces or straws, cut into 2-inch pieces, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350˚. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda, cinnamon, cloves and salt in a medium bowl. Put the cocoa powder in a large bowl. Warm the milk in a small saucepan or in the microwave until just about to simmer. Pour the milk over the cocoa powder and whisk until smooth. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla, then mix in the flour mixture.
2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 10 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
3. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Microwave the chocolate in a small microwave-safe bowl in 30-second intervals, stirring, until smooth; let cool slightly. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on high speed until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Reduce the speed to low; add the confectioners' sugar and salt and beat until combined, then increase the speed to high and beat until creamy, about 3 more minutes. Reduce the speed to medium; add the heavy cream and vanilla and beat until fluffy, about 1 minute.
4. Remove about one-third of the frosting to a small bowl and stir in the melted chocolate and cocoa powder until smooth; set aside. Tint the remaining frosting bright orange with food coloring. Transfer the orange frosting to a piping bag fitted with a large round tip.
5. Cut a small cone-shaped chunk out of the center of each cupcake with a paring knife, cutting about halfway into the cupcake. Crumble the chunks of cake into a bowl. Spread the chocolate frosting in a thin layer on the cupcakes, leaving the carved-out holes open. Pat the cupcake crumbs on the chocolate frosting to look like dirt. Pipe the orange frosting into each hole, mounding it above the surface to look like a carrot. Stick a few sour apple laces into the orange frosting to look like carrot tops.



Mini Chocolate Ganache cupcakes

◀ MINI CHOCOLATE GANACHE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 24

FOR THE CUPCAKES

2	ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
¼	cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
¼	cup packed light brown sugar
¼	cup hot brewed coffee
½	cup all-purpose flour
¼	cup granulated sugar
½	teaspoon salt
¼	teaspoon baking soda
1	large egg plus 1 egg yolk
¼	cup vegetable oil
¼	cup buttermilk
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE GANACHE

1	cup heavy cream
2	tablespoons light corn syrup
2	tablespoons unsalted butter
Pinch of salt	
8	ounces chopped bittersweet or semisweet chocolate

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 325°. Line a 24-cup mini-muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Combine the chocolate, cocoa powder and brown sugar in a large bowl; whisk in the hot coffee. Let cool to room temperature.

2. Whisk the flour, granulated sugar, salt and baking soda in a medium bowl. Whisk the egg, egg yolk, vegetable oil, buttermilk and vanilla into the melted chocolate mixture. Add the flour mixture and whisk until smooth.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups (about a scant tablespoon of batter into each). Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool a few minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the ganache: Fill a large bowl halfway with ice water. Combine the heavy cream, corn syrup, butter and salt in a medium saucepan and bring to a simmer. Remove from the heat; add the chocolate and whisk until smooth, then let cool to room temperature. Carefully place the bowl in the ice water and let sit, stirring every few minutes, until the ganache is thick enough to spread, about 15 minutes. Spread or pipe the ganache on the cupcakes.

CRUNCHY CHOCOLATE MALT CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr (plus 4-hr chilling) | MAKES: 24

FOR THE FROSTING

⅔	cup sugar
1	teaspoon light corn syrup
3	cups heavy cream
3	tablespoons unsalted butter
7	ounces milk chocolate, chopped
4	ounces bittersweet chocolate, chopped
½	teaspoon kosher salt

FOR THE CUPCAKES

2	cups all-purpose flour
1	tablespoon baking powder
¾	teaspoon fine salt
1	cup malted milk powder
¾	cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1⅓	cups sugar
4	large eggs, at room temperature
1¾	cups half-and-half
1½	cups crispy rice cereal

1. Make the frosting: Sprinkle the sugar evenly in a large skillet and add the corn syrup. Bring to a boil over medium heat, stirring once or twice. Continue to boil, swirling the pan but not stirring, until the caramel is amber. Carefully pour in the heavy cream (it might splatter) and add the butter. Simmer, whisking constantly, until the caramel is smooth, about 2 minutes.

2. Combine both chocolates and the salt in a medium heatproof bowl. Pour the hot caramel over the chocolate and let stand until melted, about 5 minutes. Whisk until smooth and shiny, then cover and refrigerate until set, at least 4 hours or overnight. (The frosting can be made up to 2 days ahead.)

3. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 375°. Line two 12-cup muffin pans with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl. Sift the malted milk and cocoa powders into another bowl.

4. Beat the butter and sugar in a third bowl with a mixer until light and fluffy, about 7 minutes. Add the malted milk powder mixture and beat until combined. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. With the mixer on low speed, add the flour mixture in three additions, alternating with the half-and-half, beginning and ending with flour.

5. Divide the batter evenly among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer to racks and let cool 10 minutes in the pans, then remove the cupcakes to the racks to cool completely.

6. Beat the chilled frosting with a mixer or whisk until thick, about 2 minutes (don't overwhip). Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Refrigerate until ready to serve, then sprinkle with the cereal.

IRISH STOUT CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	cup all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
¼	cup milk
½	cup stout
½	cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1	cup granulated sugar
¾	cup vegetable oil
1	large egg
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3	cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt	
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2	tablespoons Irish whiskey
Shaved chocolate, for topping	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Heat the milk and stout until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the whiskey until fluffy, 1 minute.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with shaved chocolate.

GLUTEN-FREE CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

⅓	cup brown rice flour
⅓	cup sorghum flour
⅓	cup tapioca flour
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
¾	cup milk
½	cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1	cup granulated sugar
¾	cup vegetable oil
2	large eggs
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
2	cups confectioners' sugar
4	ounces semisweet chocolate, melted and cooled
2	tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
2	tablespoons milk
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk all the flours, the baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, eggs and vanilla. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Pulse the butter, confectioners' sugar, melted chocolate, cocoa powder, milk and vanilla in a food processor until smooth. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes.

CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES WITH TOASTED MERINGUE

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 2 hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
½ cup whole milk
½ cup water
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
1 cup sugar
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon grated orange zest

FOR THE GANACHE
2 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
¼ cup heavy cream

FOR THE MERINGUE
2 large egg whites
½ cup sugar
Pinch of cream of tartar
Orange gel food coloring

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Put the cocoa powder in a large bowl. Microwave the milk and water in a small microwave-safe bowl until steaming, 1 to 2 minutes; pour over the cocoa powder and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly.

2. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a small bowl. Whisk the sugar, vegetable oil, egg, vanilla and orange zest into the cocoa mixture, then whisk in the flour mixture.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the ganache: Microwave the chocolate and heavy cream in a microwave-safe bowl in 30-second intervals, stirring, until melted, about 1 minute. Let sit until thickened but still pourable, 5 minutes. Spoon over the cupcakes, gently spreading to cover. Let set 10 minutes.

5. Make the meringue: Whisk the egg whites, sugar and cream of tartar in a large heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water (do not let the bowl touch the water). Cook, whisking, until the sugar dissolves, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and beat with a mixer on medium-high speed until stiff glossy peaks form, 5 to 8 minutes. Tint with orange food coloring.

6. Generously spread or pipe the meringue on the cupcakes. Brown the meringue with a kitchen torch.

Red Velvet

RED VELVET CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup vegetable oil
½ cup milk
1 large egg
¾ cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar
1 tablespoon red food coloring
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt
2 cups confectioners' sugar

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.

2. In a large bowl, whisk the vegetable oil, milk and egg. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vinegar, food coloring and vanilla. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, vanilla and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes.

CRANBERRY RED VELVET CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr (plus 4-hr cranberry drying) | MAKES: 12

FOR THE SUGARED CRANBERRIES
1 cup granulated sugar
½ cup water
1½ cups cranberries (thawed if frozen)

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup granulated sugar
½ cup vegetable oil
½ cup buttermilk
1 large egg
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
1 tablespoon red food coloring
1½ cups all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup chopped cranberries (thawed if frozen)

FOR THE FROSTING
1 8-ounce package cream cheese, at room temperature
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
1½ cups confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Make the sugared cranberries: Bring ½ cup granulated sugar and the water to a boil in a small saucepan. Pour over the cranberries in a heatproof bowl. Let cool 1 hour. Drain the cranberries, then roll in the remaining ½ cup sugar on a baking sheet. Let dry 4 hours.

2. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, buttermilk, egg, vanilla and food coloring in a large bowl. Stir in the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt. Fold in the chopped cranberries.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out with moist crumbs, about 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the cream cheese, butter and confectioners' sugar with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla on medium-high speed until the frosting is creamy, 3 minutes.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with the sugared cranberries.

Red Velvet

PEPPERMINT RED VELVET CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 45 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
½ cup vegetable oil
½ cup cold milk
1 large egg
¾ cup granulated sugar
1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar
1 tablespoon red food coloring
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 teaspoon peppermint extract

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
2½ cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon peppermint extract
1 to 2 tablespoons milk
Red nonpareils, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl. In a large bowl, whisk the vegetable oil, milk and the egg. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vinegar, food coloring and both extracts. Whisk the dry ingredients into the wet ingredients.
2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
3. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on low speed until combined. Beat in both extracts on medium-high speed until creamy. Beat in the milk until fluffy.
4. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Sprinkle with red nonpareils.

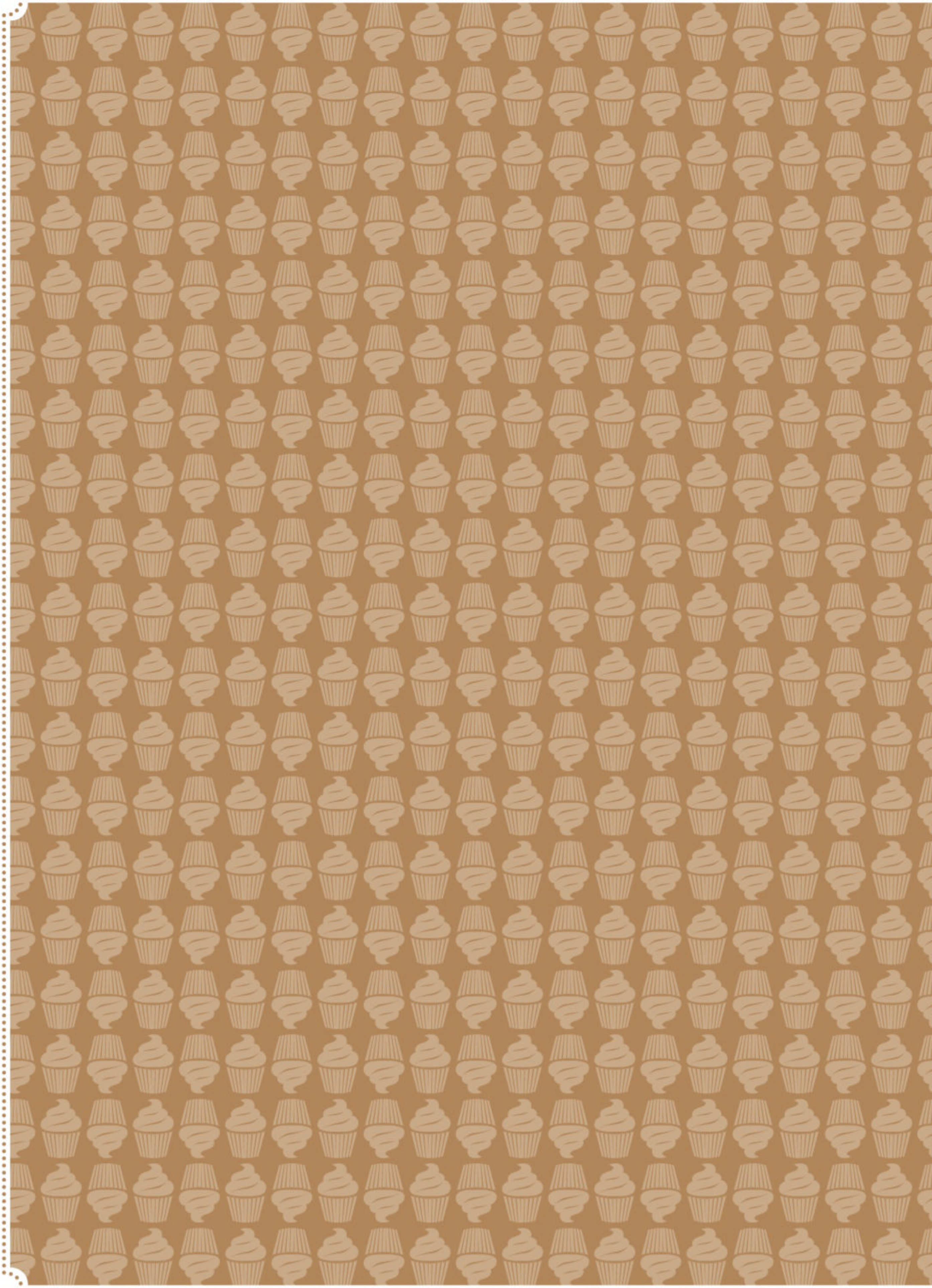
RED VELVET SPICE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 45 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground allspice
¼ teaspoon salt
¾ cup granulated sugar
½ cup whole milk
½ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 tablespoon distilled white vinegar
1 tablespoon red food coloring
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt
2 cups confectioners' sugar
1 cup mixed orange, yellow and brown nonpareils

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, cinnamon, allspice and salt in a large bowl. Blend the granulated sugar, milk, vegetable oil, egg, vinegar, food coloring and vanilla in a blender until smooth. Add to the flour mixture and stir until combined.
2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
3. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the cream cheese, butter, vanilla and salt in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until creamy, 2 to 3 minutes. Reduce the speed to medium low; gradually add the confectioners' sugar and beat until smooth. Increase the mixer speed to high and beat until fluffy, about 1 more minute. (Refrigerate the frosting to firm up if needed.)
4. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Dip the tops of the cupcakes in the nonpareils; shake off any excess.



vanilla cupcakes

CLASSIC VANILLA CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½	cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING

1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3	cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt	
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2	tablespoons milk

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in the granulated sugar until creamy, about 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Add the vanilla and beat on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, 1 more minute. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes.

COCONUT-CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 24

FOR THE CUPCAKES

2	large eggs plus 4 egg whites, at room temperature
1	cup canned cream of coconut
1	teaspoon coconut extract
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
2¼	cups cake flour, sifted
1	cup granulated sugar
2	teaspoons baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, cut into pieces, at room temperature

FOR THE TOPPING AND GLAZE

2	cups whole milk
1	14-ounce package sweetened shredded coconut
1	tablespoon confectioners' sugar
½	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt	
6	ounces bittersweet chocolate, finely chopped
3	tablespoons light corn syrup
3	tablespoons hot water
1	tablespoon unsalted butter
Roasted almonds, for topping	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 325°. Line two 12-cup muffin pans with paper or foil liners. Whisk the whole eggs and egg whites in a large bowl. Whisk in the cream of coconut and the coconut and vanilla extracts until smooth.

2. Whisk the flour, granulated sugar, baking powder and salt in a separate large bowl. Beat in the butter, one piece at a time, with a mixer on low speed until the mixture resembles coarse meal, 3 to 4 minutes. Beat in half of the egg mixture on medium high until fluffy, 1 minute. Beat in the remaining egg mixture, scraping the bowl as needed.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups, filling each about halfway. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 18 to 22 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 10 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the topping: Bring the milk, coconut, confectioners' sugar, vanilla and salt to a simmer in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook until the mixture thickens, stirring occasionally, about 15 minutes. Let cool completely.

5. Make the glaze: Put the chocolate, corn syrup, hot water and butter in a microwave-safe bowl; cover and microwave until the chocolate melts, about 2 minutes. Whisk to combine.

6. Press 1 heaping tablespoon of the coconut topping on each cupcake, then top with 1 teaspoon glaze and some almonds. Refrigerate until the glaze sets, about 20 minutes.

RAINBOW CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1 hr 45 min | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1¾ cups cake flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
⅔ cup whole milk, at room temperature
Finely grated zest of 1 lemon, plus juice of ½ lemon
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup sugar
3 large egg whites, at room temperature
Red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple gel food coloring

FOR THE FROSTING
⅔ cup sugar
2 large egg whites, at room temperature
¼ cup cold water
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon cream of tartar
Pinch of salt

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 325˚. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with white paper liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl; set aside. Stir the milk, lemon juice and vanilla in a small bowl; set aside (the milk will curdle). Beat the butter, ¾ cup sugar and the lemon zest in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Reduce the mixer speed to low; beat in the flour mixture in three batches, alternating with the milk mixture. Increase the mixer speed to medium and beat briefly until smooth.

2. Beat the egg whites in a large bowl with a mixer on high speed until foamy. Gradually beat in the remaining ¼ cup sugar; beat until stiff glossy peaks form, 3 minutes. Using a rubber spatula, fold the beaten egg whites into the batter in two batches.

3. Divide the batter evenly among 6 small bowls. Tint each with 1 to 3 drops gel food coloring, stirring to distribute the color.

4. Divide the purple batter evenly among the prepared muffin cups (about 1½ teaspoons per cup) and gently spread to cover the bottom; layer the blue, green, yellow, orange and red batters on top, gently spreading each color but making sure not to swirl the colors together. (The muffin cups will be full.) Bake until the tops of the cupcakes spring back when pressed, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

5. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Whisk the sugar, egg whites, water, vanilla, cream of tartar and salt in a large metal bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water until combined (do not let the bowl touch the water). With the bowl still over the simmering water, beat the mixture with a hand mixer on medium-high speed until stiff glossy peaks form, 5 to 7 minutes. Remove the bowl from the saucepan and let cool 5 minutes. Generously spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes.

Ombré Vanilla cupcakes

◀ OMBRÉ VANILLA CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 50 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1½ cups all-purpose flour
1¼ teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup sugar
2 large eggs, at room temperature
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
⅔ cup whole milk, at room temperature

FOR THE FROSTING

4 large egg whites
¾ cup sugar
Pinch of salt
2 sticks unsalted butter, cut into pieces, at room temperature
Assorted food coloring

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl.
2. Beat the butter and sugar in a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment on medium-high speed until fluffy, about 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, scraping the bowl as needed. Beat in the vanilla. Beat in half of the flour mixture on medium low, then all of the milk, then the remaining flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake, rotating the pan halfway through, until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then transfer the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Whisk the egg whites, sugar and salt in a heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water (do not let the bowl touch the water) until the mixture is warm and the sugar dissolves. Remove the bowl from the pan; let cool slightly. Beat the egg white mixture in a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment (or with a hand mixer) on medium-high speed until stiff peaks form, 12 to 15 minutes. Beat in the butter a few pieces at a time, then continue beating until smooth. (Don't worry if the mixture looks separated at first—it will come together as you keep beating.)
5. Divide the frosting among small bowls. Tint with food coloring, making several shades of the same color. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes.

MINI MOCHA CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1 hr | MAKES: 36

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ cup milk
¼ cup brewed espresso, cooled

FOR THE FROSTING

1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
2 cups confectioners' sugar
4 ounces semisweet chocolate, melted
2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
2 tablespoons milk
1 tablespoon instant espresso powder
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Chocolate-covered espresso beans, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line 36 mini-muffin cups with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in the granulated sugar until creamy, 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat in the espresso on medium-high speed until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Pulse the butter, confectioners' sugar, melted chocolate, cocoa powder, milk, espresso powder and vanilla in a food processor until smooth.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with chocolate-covered espresso beans.

CHOCOLATE CHEESECAKE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

¾	cup chocolate graham cracker crumbs
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature, plus 3 tablespoons, melted
1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½	cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING

4	tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
6	ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt	
2	cups confectioners' sugar
½	cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Combine the graham cracker crumbs and melted butter. Press into the liners, reserving a little for topping. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the remaining 1 stick butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Add the granulated sugar and beat until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, vanilla and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar and cocoa powder on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium-high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with the reserved graham cracker crumbs.

GLUTEN-FREE VANILLA CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	cup brown rice flour
⅓	cup tapioca flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½	cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING

1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3	cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt	
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2	tablespoons milk
Sanding sugar, for topping	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the brown rice flour, tapioca flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in the granulated sugar until creamy, 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Add the vanilla and beat on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, 1 more minute.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with sanding sugar.

VANILLA BIRTHDAY CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt
2 cups confectioners' sugar
Rainbow nonpareils, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Add the granulated sugar and beat until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, vanilla and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with nonpareils.

PEACHES-AND-CREAM CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1½ hr | TOTAL: 2 hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1½ cups all-purpose flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
¾ cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
⅛ to ¼ teaspoon pure almond extract
⅔ cup buttermilk

FOR THE PEACHES
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
2 small ripe peaches, each cut into 6 wedges
1 tablespoon granulated sugar

FOR THE FROSTING
2 sticks unsalted butter, at room temperature
2½ cups confectioners' sugar
3 tablespoons whole milk
¼ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon pure almond extract

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350˚. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl. Beat the butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Beat in the eggs one at a time, then beat in the vanilla and almond extracts. Reduce the mixer speed to low and beat in half of the flour mixture, then the buttermilk, then the remaining flour mixture until smooth.
2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops of the cupcakes are lightly browned and spring back when pressed, about 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
3. Meanwhile, cook the peaches: Melt the butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the peaches and granulated sugar; cook, stirring occasionally, until the sugar dissolves and the peaches start softening, 2 to 3 minutes. Cover and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, until the peaches are soft but still hold their shape, about 5 more minutes. Remove from the heat and let cool completely.
4. Make the frosting: Beat the butter and confectioners' sugar in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until smooth. Increase the speed to medium high and beat until fluffy, 2 to 3 more minutes. Beat in the milk and the vanilla and almond extracts until smooth.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Refrigerate until the frosting is firm, 20 to 30 minutes. Top each cupcake with a peach wedge.

MINI TRIPLE CHIP CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1 hr | MAKES: 36

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup packed light brown sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½	cup milk
¼	cup butterscotch chips
¼	cup white chocolate chips
¼	cup semisweet chocolate chips

FOR THE TOPPING

1	cup heavy cream
⅓	cup confectioners' sugar

Butterscotch chips, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 36-cup mini-muffin pan with nonstick liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Add the brown sugar and beat until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined. Fold in the butterscotch chips and both chocolate chips.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the topping: Beat the heavy cream and confectioners' sugar in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until stiff peaks form.

5. Spoon or pipe the whipped cream on the cupcakes. Top with butterscotch chips.

MARBLED CHEESECAKE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

4	ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1	tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
1	cup plus 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
½	cup plus 1 tablespoon milk
1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract

FOR THE GLAZE

2	cups confectioners' sugar
1	teaspoon unsweetened cocoa powder

2 to 3 tablespoons buttermilk

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Combine the cream cheese, cocoa powder and 1 tablespoon each granulated sugar and milk in a large bowl. Beat with a mixer until smooth.

2. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Beat the butter in a separate large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in the remaining 1 cup granulated sugar until creamy, 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the remaining ½ cup milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined. Swirl the cream cheese mixture into the batter.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the glaze: Whisk the confectioners' sugar, cocoa powder and buttermilk until smooth. Spoon the glaze over the cupcakes.

PEANUT CUPCAKES WITH NOUGAT-CHOCOLATE FROSTING

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 24

FOR THE CUPCAKES
2½ cups all-purpose flour
2¼ teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
3 large eggs, at room temperature
¾ cup granulated sugar
½ cup packed light brown sugar
10 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
¾ cup whole milk
2 cups chopped salted roasted peanuts, plus more for topping

FOR THE NOUGAT FROSTING
4 cups marshmallow creme
½ cup creamy peanut butter
Pinch of salt

FOR THE CHOCOLATE FROSTING
6 ounces milk chocolate, chopped
4 ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
2½ cups confectioners' sugar
¼ cup whole milk
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon salt

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line two 12-cup muffin pans with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.
2. In a large bowl, beat the eggs and both sugars with a mixer until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the melted butter and vanilla. With the mixer on low speed, add half of the flour mixture, the milk and then the remaining flour. Fold in the peanuts (don't overmix).
3. Divide the batter evenly among the prepared muffin cups, filling each about halfway. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 20 to 22 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 10 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the nougat frosting: Combine the marshmallow creme, peanut butter and salt in a large bowl. Beat with a mixer until smooth.
5. Make the chocolate frosting: Put both chocolates in a large microwave-safe bowl and microwave on 50 percent power until soft, about 1 minute. Stir, then continue to microwave until melted, 1 to 2 more minutes. Add the confectioners' sugar, milk, butter, vanilla and salt; beat with a mixer until smooth and creamy.
6. Spread or pipe the nougat frosting on the cupcakes, then top with the chocolate frosting, leaving some of the nougat exposed. Top with chopped peanuts.

MINI EGG CUPCAKES ▶

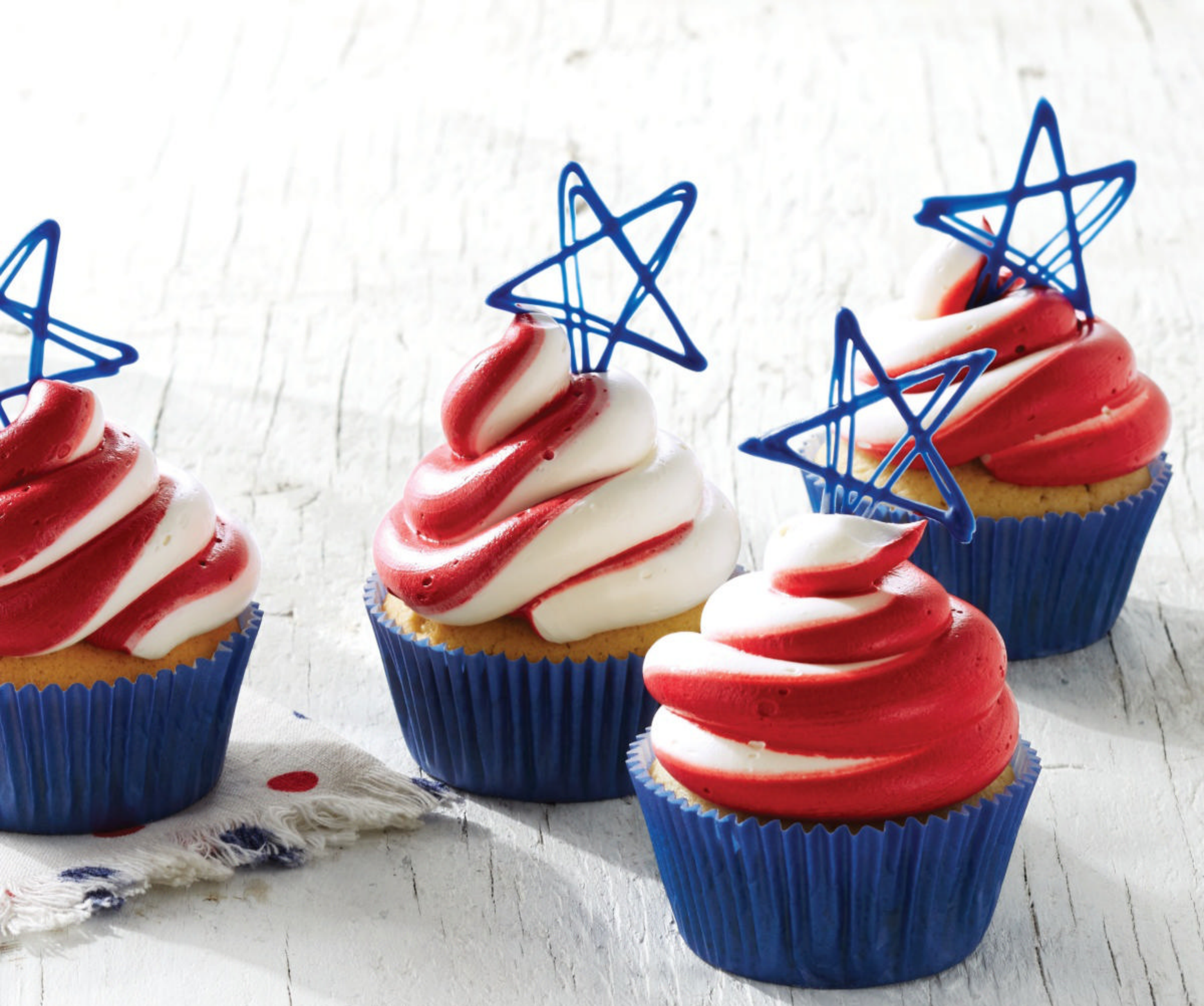
ACTIVE: 45 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr
MAKES: 24

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
¾ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
⅔ cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
1 large egg plus 1 egg yolk
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
⅓ cup whole milk

FOR THE FROSTING
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
2 cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 tablespoon whole milk
Yellow, pink and blue food coloring

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 24-cup mini-muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Beat the butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until fluffy, about 4 minutes. Beat in the lemon zest. Beat in the whole egg, then the yolk, beating well after each addition; beat in the vanilla. Reduce the speed to low and beat in the flour mixture in three batches, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium speed until combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the cupcakes are golden and the tops spring back when pressed, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 10 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until combined. Beat in the vanilla on medium-high speed until creamy, about 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, about 1 more minute.
5. Divide the frosting among 3 small bowls. Tint one yellow, one pink and one blue with food coloring. Drop alternating spoonfuls of the frosting into a pastry bag fitted with a ½-inch round tip. Pipe the frosting in a swirl onto the cupcakes. Serve in a clean egg carton.

Mini Egg cupcakes



STARS AND STRIPES CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1½ cups all-purpose flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
¾ cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, melted
1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
⅓ cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING AND TOPPING

2 sticks unsalted butter, at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon raspberry extract
2 to 3 tablespoons milk
Red gel food coloring
½ cup blue candy melts

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350˚. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Combine the granulated sugar and eggs in a large bowl; beat with a mixer on medium-high speed until pale and thick, about 2 minutes. Beat in the melted butter and vanilla until smooth. Reduce the mixer speed to low; beat in half of the flour mixture, then the milk, then the remaining flour mixture until smooth.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 10 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, about 1 minute. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar until smooth, then beat in the vanilla and raspberry extracts. Beat in the milk, 1 tablespoon at a time, until creamy. Transfer half of the frosting to a separate bowl and tint red with food coloring. Put the white and red frostings in separate resealable plastic bags; snip a corner of each. Snip a corner of a larger resealable plastic bag; put both frosting bags in the larger bag and twist so that they pipe out of the snipped corner. Pipe the frosting onto the cupcakes.

5. Make the candy stars: Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Microwave the candy melts in a microwave-safe bowl in 45-second intervals, stirring, until smooth. Transfer to a small resealable plastic bag and snip a small corner. Pipe twelve 2- to 3-inch stars onto the parchment, piping double or triple lines for stability. Refrigerate until set, about 10 minutes. Carefully lift the stars from the parchment and insert into the frosting on each cupcake.

BLUEBERRY-MAPLE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon maple extract
½ cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest
2 tablespoons milk
½ cup blueberries
Pure maple syrup, for drizzling

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in the granulated sugar until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla and maple extracts. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Add the vanilla and lemon zest and beat on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, 1 more minute.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Toss the blueberries with a drizzle of maple syrup in a small bowl. Top each cupcake with a few blueberries.

HONEY-GRAHAM CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
¾ cup all-purpose flour
¾ cup finely ground graham crackers
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1½ cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 tablespoons milk
⅓ cup honey
Graham cracker crumbs, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, graham cracker crumbs, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in the granulated sugar until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Add the vanilla and beat on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, 1 more minute. Beat in the honey.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Sprinkle with graham cracker crumbs.

BOSTON CREAM PIE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½	cup milk

FOR THE FILLING AND GLAZE

½	cup heavy cream
4	ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
⅔	cup prepared vanilla pudding

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350˚. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Add the sugar and beat until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the glaze: Heat the heavy cream in a small saucepan over medium heat. Pour the hot cream over the chocolate and whisk until smooth, then let cool until thick.

5. Fit a pastry bag with a small tip; fill with the vanilla pudding. Cut a slit into the top of the cupcakes; pipe in the pudding. Spoon the chocolate glaze over the cupcakes. Let set.

COOKIES-AND-CREAM CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 45 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

⅔	cup refrigerated chocolate chip cookie dough
1¼	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½	cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING

1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3	cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt	
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2	tablespoons milk
⅔	cup crushed chocolate sandwich cookies (about 6 cookies), plus broken pieces for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350˚. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Roll the cookie dough into 12 small balls.

2. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in the granulated sugar until creamy, 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Top each cupcake with a cookie dough ball. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Add the vanilla and beat on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, 1 more minute. Fold in the crushed sandwich cookies.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with broken sandwich cookies.

CHAMPAGNE-VANILLA CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 2 hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 half-bottle (375 ml) champagne or other sparkling wine (about 1½ cups)
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 cup all-purpose flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
½ teaspoon kosher salt
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
¾ cup sugar
1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise and seeds scraped (pod reserved for the frosting)
1 large egg, separated

FOR THE FROSTING
2 teaspoons unflavored gelatin powder
½ cup sugar
¼ teaspoon kosher salt
4 large egg yolks
½ cup cold heavy cream
Sugar pearls, for sprinkling

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Pour the champagne into a bowl and whisk until the bubbles dissipate. Combine ½ cup of the champagne and the vanilla in a small bowl. Set aside the remaining champagne for the frosting.

2. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Beat the butter, sugar and vanilla seeds in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Add the egg yolk and beat until smooth. Reduce the mixer speed to low; beat in the flour mixture in two batches, alternating with the champagne-vanilla mixture, until just combined. In a separate bowl, whisk the egg white until stiff peaks form, then gently fold into the batter with a rubber spatula.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Put 1½ tablespoons of the reserved champagne in a small bowl; sprinkle the gelatin on top and let stand 5 minutes. Whisk the sugar, salt and egg yolks in a small saucepan until smooth. Whisk in the remaining champagne (about 1 cup) and add the vanilla pod. Cook over medium heat, stirring, until the custard is thick enough to coat the back of a spoon, 3 to 4 minutes. Pour the hot custard through a fine-mesh sieve into a large metal bowl; discard the vanilla pod. Add the gelatin mixture and stir until dissolved. Refrigerate the custard, stirring every 5 minutes, until it is the consistency of soft whipped cream, 10 to 20 minutes.

5. Beat the heavy cream in a medium bowl with a mixer on medium speed until stiff peaks form. Add the whipped cream to the custard and gently whisk until combined. Refrigerate the frosting, gently folding with a rubber spatula every 5 minutes, until thick enough to pipe, 10 to 20 minutes.

6. Working quickly, transfer the frosting to a piping bag fitted with a large round tip and pipe onto the cupcakes. Sprinkle with sugar pearls. Refrigerate immediately to set the frosting, at least 30 minutes.

CARAMEL CORN CUPCAKES ACTIVE: 45 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	stick unsalted butter
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs
½	cup whole milk
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1	cup all-purpose flour
⅓	cup almond flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt

FOR THE FROSTING

1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
2	cups confectioners' sugar
¾	teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
⅛	teaspoon salt
½	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
¼	cup dulce de leche

Caramel corn, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Melt the butter in a small skillet over medium heat; cook, swirling the pan occasionally, until the butter is browned, 6 to 9 minutes. Immediately transfer to a medium bowl and let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, eggs, milk and vanilla.
2. Whisk the all-purpose flour, almond flour, baking powder and salt in a large bowl. Add the brown butter mixture and whisk until just combined (do not overmix).
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 18 to 22 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar, pumpkin pie spice and salt in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Increase the mixer speed to medium high. Add the vanilla and beat until fluffy, about 3 minutes. Swirl in the dulce de leche with a rubber spatula, leaving some streaks.
5. Transfer the frosting to a piping bag fitted with a round tip. Pipe the frosting onto the cupcakes. Top with caramel corn.

SALTED CARAMEL-TOFFEE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon fine salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½	cup milk
½	cup toffee chips

FOR THE FROSTING

1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
2	cups confectioners' sugar
4	ounces semisweet chocolate, melted
½	cup caramel sauce
2	tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
2	tablespoons milk
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Toffee chips and flaky sea salt, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with nonstick liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and fine salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in the granulated sugar until creamy, 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined. Fold in the toffee chips.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Pulse the butter, confectioners' sugar, melted chocolate, caramel sauce, cocoa powder, milk and vanilla in a food processor until smooth.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with toffee chips and flaky sea salt.

COCONUT-WHITE CHOCOLATE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½	cup unsweetened coconut milk
½	cup white chocolate chips

FOR THE FROSTING

1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3	cups confectioners' sugar

Pinch of salt

2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2	tablespoons unsweetened coconut milk

Sweetened shredded coconut, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with nonstick liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in the granulated sugar until creamy, 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the coconut milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined. Fold in the white chocolate chips.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Add the vanilla and beat on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the coconut milk until fluffy, 1 more minute.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with shredded coconut.

MINI CHOCOLATE CHIP CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 20 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 36

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon fine salt
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ cup milk
½ cup mini chocolate chips

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of fine salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 tablespoons milk
Flaky sea salt and mini chocolate chips, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line 36 mini-muffin cups with nonstick liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and fine salt in a medium bowl.
2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Add the granulated sugar and beat until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined. Fold in the chocolate chips.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and fine salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Add the vanilla and beat on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, 1 more minute.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with flaky sea salt and mini chocolate chips.

TIRAMISU CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon instant espresso powder
1 stick unsalted butter, melted
½ cup granulated sugar
½ cup packed light brown sugar
½ cup sour cream
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
¼ cup brandy

FOR THE FROSTING
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
4 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
¾ cup mascarpone cheese
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt
2 cups confectioners' sugar
Unsweetened cocoa powder, for dusting

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and espresso powder in a medium bowl.
2. Whisk the melted butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan. Brush the warm cupcakes with the brandy, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, mascarpone, vanilla and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Dust with cocoa powder.

MILK-AND-COOKIES CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr
MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
⅔	cup plus 2 tablespoons sweetened condensed milk
¼	cup granulated sugar
1	large egg
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½	teaspoon salt
1	cup all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
¼	teaspoon baking soda
¼	cup plus 2 tablespoons whole milk
2	tablespoons mini chocolate chips

FOR THE FROSTING

6	ounces milk chocolate, chopped
1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
¼	cup sweetened condensed milk, plus more for topping
Pinch of salt	
¾	cup confectioners' sugar
Mini chocolate chip cookies, for topping	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 325°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Combine the butter, ⅔ cup condensed milk, the granulated sugar, egg, vanilla and salt in a food processor. Process until smooth and slightly thickened, about 2 minutes. Add the flour, baking powder and baking soda and pulse a few times until blended. Drizzle in ¼ cup whole milk, pulsing a few times, until smooth.

2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Sprinkle the mini chocolate chips on top. Bake until the tops of the cupcakes are golden and spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely. Poke the warm cupcakes all over with a toothpick. Mix the remaining 2 tablespoons each condensed milk and whole milk; brush evenly over the warm cupcakes. Let cool completely.

3. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Put the milk chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl and microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring, until smooth. Let cool slightly. Combine the butter, melted chocolate, condensed milk and salt in a food processor and process until smooth, scraping down the sides occasionally. Add the confectioners' sugar and process until smooth, about 1 more minute. Transfer to a bowl and refrigerate until firm but still spreadable, about 20 minutes.

4. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes, making a small well in the middle. Fill each well with ½ to ¾ teaspoon condensed milk. Top with mini cookies.

MICKEY AND MINNIE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1½ hr | TOTAL: 2 hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½	cup milk

FOR THE CANDY BOWS

1	cup red candy melts
¼	cup white candy melts

FOR THE TOPPING AND FROSTING

36	chocolate sandwich cookies
4	ounces semisweet chocolate, chopped
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
2	cups confectioners' sugar
2	tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
2	tablespoons milk
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, about 1 minute. Beat in the granulated sugar until creamy, about 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Reduce the mixer speed to low and beat in the flour mixture in three batches, alternating with the milk. Increase the mixer speed to medium high and beat until just combined.

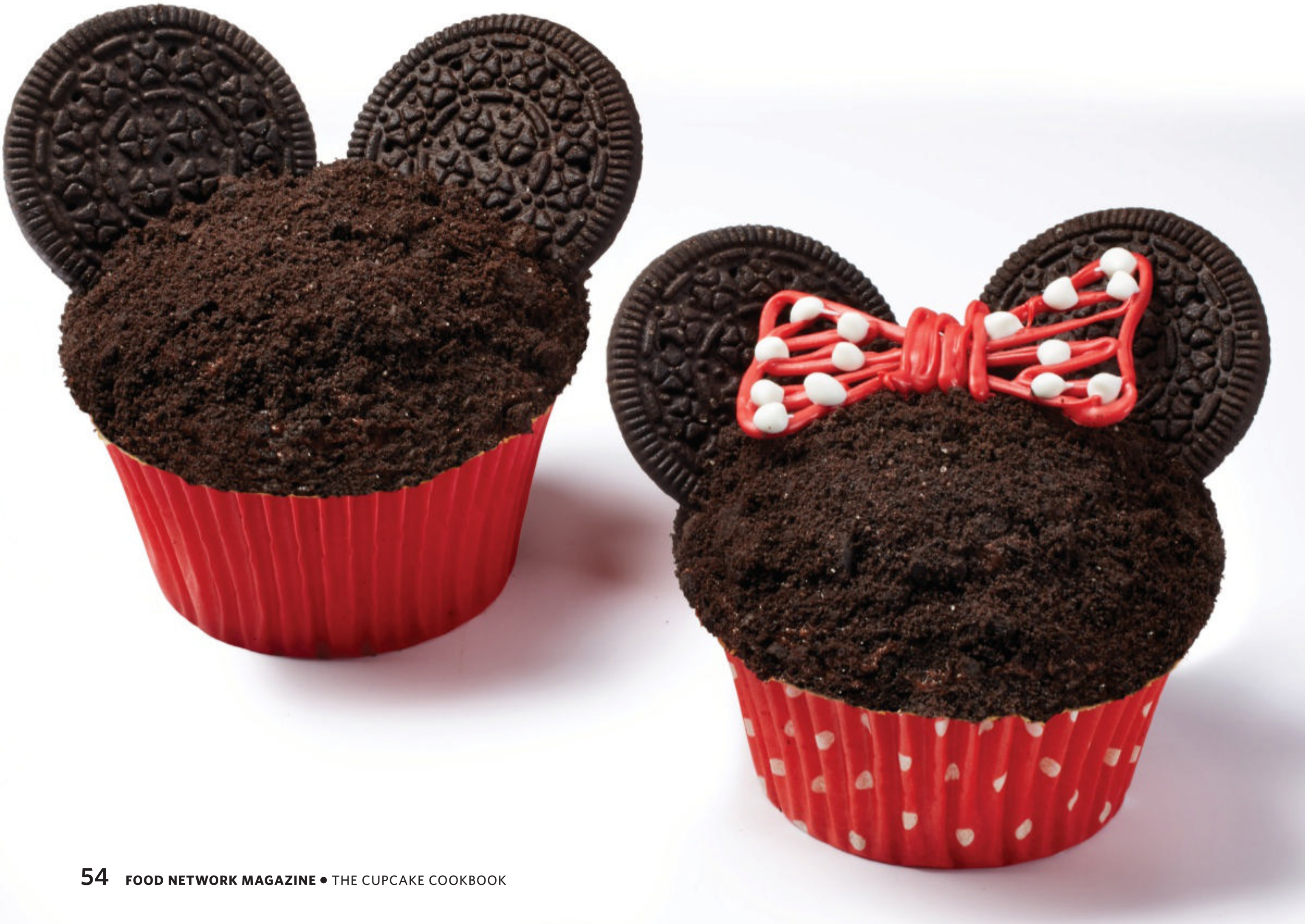
2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

3. Meanwhile, make the candy bows: Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Put the red candy melts in a microwave-safe bowl; microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring, until smooth. Transfer to a resealable plastic bag and snip a small corner. Pipe 2½-inch bows onto the parchment (make a few extra bows in case some break). Put the white candy melts in a microwave-safe bowl; microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring, until smooth; let cool slightly. Transfer to another resealable plastic bag and snip a small corner. Pipe white dots on the bows; let set, 15 to 20 minutes.

4. Make the topping: Finely grind 24 sandwich cookies in a food processor. Transfer to a small bowl and set aside. Wipe out the food processor.

5. Make the frosting: Put the chocolate in a microwave-safe bowl; microwave in 30-second intervals, stirring, until smooth. Pulse the butter, confectioners' sugar, melted chocolate, cocoa powder, milk and vanilla in the food processor until smooth. Spread the frosting on the cupcakes.

6. Dip the cupcakes in the cookie crumbs, pressing to adhere. Separate the remaining 12 sandwich cookies; arrange 2 halves upright on each cupcake for the ears, pressing the cookies into the frosting. Carefully lift the bows off the parchment; lean them up against the cookies.



CRÈME BRÛLÉE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
½ vanilla bean, split lengthwise, seeds scraped
1 cup sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ cup milk

FOR THE TOPPING

2 cups prepared vanilla pudding
Sugar, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in the vanilla seeds and sugar until creamy, 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla extract. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Spread the vanilla pudding on the cupcakes. Sprinkle with sugar to cover completely. Brown with a kitchen torch.

ALMOND-COCONUT CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
¾ cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon pure almond extract
½ cup milk
1 cup sweetened shredded coconut

FOR THE FROSTING

1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
2 cups confectioners' sugar
4 ounces semisweet chocolate, melted
2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
2 tablespoons milk
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Almonds, for topping

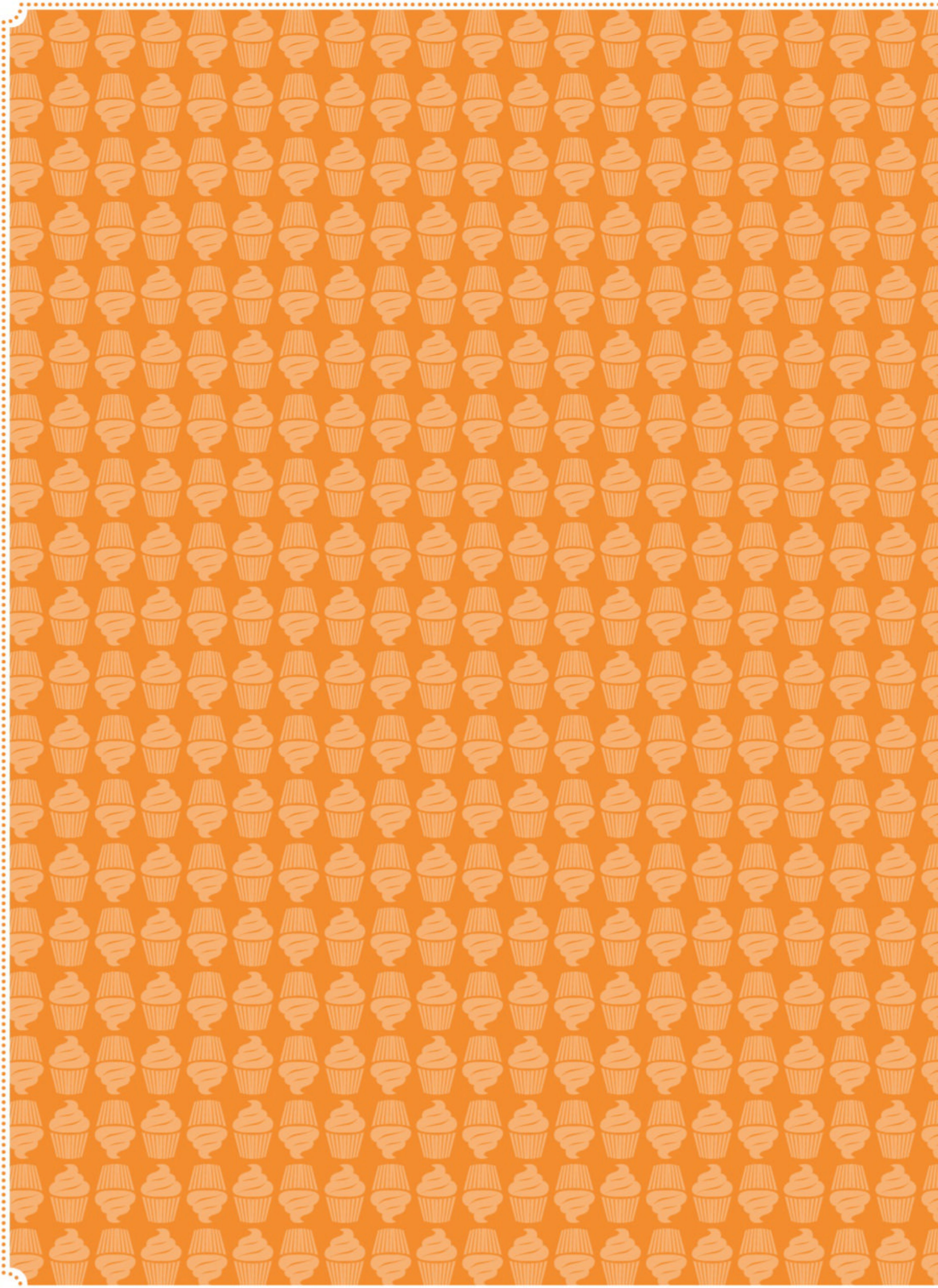
1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in the granulated sugar until creamy, 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla and almond extracts. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined. Fold in the coconut.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Combine the butter, confectioners' sugar, melted chocolate, cocoa powder, milk and vanilla in a food processor. Pulse until smooth.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with almonds.



spice cupcakes

CLASSIC SPICE CUPCAKES WITH CREAM CHEESE FROSTING

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ teaspoon ground allspice
1 stick unsalted butter, melted
½ cup granulated sugar
½ cup packed light brown sugar
½ cup sour cream
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt
2 cups confectioners' sugar

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger and allspice in a medium bowl.
2. Whisk the melted butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, vanilla and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes.

MAPLE-WALNUT CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ teaspoon ground allspice
1 stick unsalted butter, melted
½ cup finely chopped walnuts
½ teaspoon maple extract
½ cup granulated sugar
½ cup packed light brown sugar
½ cup sour cream
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
2 tablespoons maple syrup
Pinch of salt
2 cups confectioners' sugar
Candied walnuts, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger and allspice in a medium bowl.
2. Whisk the melted butter, walnuts, maple extract, granulated sugar, brown sugar, sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, vanilla, maple syrup and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with candied walnuts.

PUMPKIN CUPCAKES WITH TOASTED MARSHMALLOW FROSTING

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 24

FOR THE CUPCAKES

2½	cups all-purpose flour
2	teaspoons ground cinnamon
1	teaspoon baking powder
1	teaspoon baking soda
1	teaspoon kosher salt
½	teaspoon ground nutmeg
½	teaspoon ground cloves
2	cups packed light brown sugar
4	large eggs
2	sticks unsalted butter, melted
1	15-ounce can pure pumpkin puree
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

⅔	cup granulated sugar
¼	teaspoon cream of tartar
4	large egg whites
Pinch of salt	
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract

1. Make the cupcakes: Position racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven and preheat to 350˚. Line two 12-cup muffin pans with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda, salt, nutmeg and cloves in a medium bowl. Combine the brown sugar, eggs, melted butter, pumpkin puree and vanilla in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Add the flour mixture and whisk until just combined.

2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake, switching the pans halfway through, until the tops of the cupcakes spring back when pressed, 25 to 30 minutes. Transfer to racks and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the racks to cool completely.

3. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Combine the granulated sugar, cream of tartar, egg whites and salt in a large heatproof bowl set over a saucepan of simmering water (do not let the bowl touch the water). Whisk until the mixture is warm and the sugar dissolves, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove the bowl from the pan and beat in the vanilla with a mixer on medium-high speed until the frosting is cool and stiff glossy peaks form, 4 to 6 minutes.

4. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Brown the frosting with a kitchen torch.

CARROT-WALNUT CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	cup all-purpose flour
¾	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
¾	teaspoon salt
1	teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼	teaspoon ground nutmeg
2	large eggs
½	cup granulated sugar
⅓	cup packed light brown sugar
5⅓	tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
⅓	cup walnut oil or vegetable oil
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
2	carrots, finely grated (1¾ cups)
½	cup walnuts, roughly chopped
1	tablespoon finely chopped candied ginger

FOR THE CANDIED CARROT AND WALNUTS

	Cooking spray
1	large carrot, peeled
¾	cup granulated sugar
¾	cup water
12	walnuts

FOR THE FROSTING

6	tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	8-ounce package cream cheese, at room temperature
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
⅛	teaspoon salt
3½	cups confectioners' sugar, sifted

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and nutmeg in a medium bowl. Whisk the eggs, granulated sugar, brown sugar, melted butter, walnut oil and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture, then fold in the carrots, walnuts and candied ginger with a rubber spatula.

2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when gently pressed, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

3. Meanwhile, make the candied carrot and walnuts: Coat a baking sheet with cooking spray. Peel 12 long ribbons from the carrot using a vegetable peeler. Combine the sugar and water in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer, add the carrot ribbons and cook until translucent, 25 to 30 minutes. Carefully remove with tongs and arrange each ribbon in a small cluster on the baking sheet. Add the walnuts to the saucepan and simmer until glossy, 5 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and place on the baking sheet; let the candied carrot and walnuts cool.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, vanilla and salt in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth. Beat in the confectioners' sugar on low speed; increase the speed to medium high and beat until fluffy, 3 minutes.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with the candied carrot and walnuts.

PEANUT BUTTER–BANANA CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1¼	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
½	teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼	teaspoon ground ginger
¼	teaspoon ground allspice
1	stick unsalted butter, melted
½	cup granulated sugar
½	cup packed light brown sugar
¼	cup sour cream
½	cup mashed bananas
2	large eggs
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
¼	cup creamy peanut butter
3	cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt	
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2	tablespoons milk
Banana chips, for topping	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger and allspice in a medium bowl.
2. Whisk the melted butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, sour cream, mashed banana, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, peanut butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, 1 more minute.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with banana chips.

COOKIE BUTTER SPICE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1¼	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
½	teaspoon ground cinnamon
1	stick unsalted butter, melted
½	cup granulated sugar
½	cup packed light brown sugar
½	cup cookie butter (speculoos)
2	large eggs
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
⅓	cup mini chocolate chips

FOR THE FROSTING

1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
2	cups confectioners' sugar
4	ounces semisweet chocolate, melted
2	tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
2	tablespoons milk
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Chocolate sprinkles, for topping	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with nonstick liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon in a medium bowl.
2. Whisk the melted butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, cookie butter, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined. Fold in the chocolate chips.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 23 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Combine the butter, confectioners' sugar, melted chocolate, cocoa powder, milk and vanilla in a food processor. Pulse until smooth.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with chocolate sprinkles.

CINNAMON DULCE DE LECHE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1¼	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
1	teaspoon ground cinnamon
1	stick unsalted butter, melted
½	cup granulated sugar
½	cup packed light brown sugar
½	cup sour cream
2	large eggs
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

4	tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
6	ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt	
1	cup dulce de leche, plus more for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350˚. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon in a medium bowl.

2. Whisk the melted butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, vanilla and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the dulce de leche on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top each cupcake with a spoonful of dulce de leche.

MINI CARROT-ALMOND CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1 hr 50 min | MAKES: 48

FOR THE CANDIED CARROT

1	medium carrot
¾	cup granulated sugar
¾	cup water

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1¼	cups all-purpose flour
½	cup sliced almonds
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
1	teaspoon ground cinnamon
½	teaspoon ground ginger
¼	teaspoon ground allspice
2	carrots, grated (about 1½ cups)
⅔	cup vegetable oil
1	cup granulated sugar
3	large eggs
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

2½	cups confectioners' sugar
1	8-ounce package cream cheese, at room temperature
2	tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	teaspoon fresh lemon juice
¼	teaspoon almond extract

1. Make the candied carrot: Preheat the oven to 250˚. Peel long ribbons from the carrot using a vegetable peeler. Slice the ribbons lengthwise into ¼-inch-wide strands (you'll need about 48). Bring the granulated sugar and water to a simmer in a saucepan over medium heat. Add the carrot strands and simmer until soft, about 10 minutes. Drain and let cool slightly. Arrange the strands in clusters on a parchment paper–lined baking sheet. Bake until dry, 25 to 30 minutes. Let cool completely.

2. Make the cupcakes: Increase the oven temperature to 350˚. Line two 24-cup mini-muffin pans with paper or foil liners. Put the flour, almonds, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger and allspice in a food processor and pulse until the nuts are finely ground.

3. Whisk the grated carrots, vegetable oil, granulated sugar, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until combined. Stir in the flour mixture until just combined.

4. Divide the batter among the prepared mini-muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer to racks and let cool 5 minutes in the pans, then remove the cupcakes to the racks to cool completely.

5. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the confectioners' sugar, cream cheese and butter with a mixer on medium speed until fluffy. Beat in the lemon juice and almond extract.

6. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with the candied carrot.

Mini Carrot-Almond cupcakes

SPICE CUPCAKES WITH BAT COOKIES

ACTIVE: 45 min | TOTAL: 1 hr 15 min
MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	**stick unsalted butter, melted**
1	**cup packed light brown sugar**
½	**cup sour cream**
2	**large eggs**
1	**teaspoon apple pie spice**
1¼	**cups all-purpose flour**
½	**teaspoon baking powder**
½	**teaspoon baking soda**
½	**teaspoon salt**

FOR THE TOPPINGS

1	**16.5-ounce tube refrigerated sugar cookie dough**
¼	**cup all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting**
1	**16-ounce tub chocolate frosting**
	Black sanding sugar, for topping
1	**cup cold heavy cream**
⅓	**cup confectioners' sugar**
1	**teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the melted butter with the brown sugar, sour cream, eggs and apple pie spice in a large bowl. Whisk in the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt.

2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

3. Meanwhile, make the toppings: Knead the cookie dough with the flour until combined. Roll out the dough on a floured surface and cut into 12 bats (or other shapes) with a small cookie cutter. Transfer to a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake until just golden, about 10 minutes. Let cool. Spread the chocolate frosting on the cookies with an offset spatula. Press the frosting into black sanding sugar.

4. Beat the heavy cream, confectioners' sugar and vanilla in a large bowl with a mixer until stiff peaks form. Spread or pipe the whipped cream on the cupcakes. Top with the bat cookies.

PUMPKIN CUPCAKES WITH PUMPKIN FROSTING

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1¼	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
1	teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
1	stick unsalted butter, melted
½	cup granulated sugar
½	cup packed light brown sugar
½	cup pure pumpkin puree
2	large eggs
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

4	tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
6	ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
2	tablespoons pure pumpkin puree
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt	
2	cups confectioners' sugar
Pumpkin pie spice, for sprinkling	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and pumpkin pie spice in a medium bowl.
2. Whisk the melted butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, pumpkin puree, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, pumpkin puree, vanilla and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Sprinkle with pumpkin pie spice.

CARROT CAKE CUPCAKES WITH SWIRLED FROSTING

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1¼	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
½	teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼	teaspoon ground ginger
1	stick unsalted butter, melted
½	cup granulated sugar
½	cup packed dark brown sugar
½	cup sour cream
2	large eggs
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1½	cups grated carrots
¼	cup golden raisins

FOR THE FROSTING

4	tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
6	ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt	
2	cups confectioners' sugar
Orange food coloring	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon and ginger in a medium bowl.
2. Whisk the melted butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined. Stir in the carrots and raisins.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, vanilla and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes. Divide the frosting between 2 bowls and tint one with orange food coloring. Spread some of each of the white and orange frosting onto each cupcake and swirl.

BROWN BUTTER SPICE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

10	tablespoons unsalted butter
1¼	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
½	teaspoon ground cinnamon
½	teaspoon ground ginger
¼	teaspoon ground nutmeg
½	cup granulated sugar
½	cup packed light brown sugar
½	cup sour cream
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3	cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt	
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2	tablespoons milk
1	vanilla bean, split lengthwise and seeds scraped

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Melt the butter in a skillet over medium heat; cook until browned, about 5 minutes.
2. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger and nutmeg in a medium bowl. Whisk the browned butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, about 16 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla extract on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk and vanilla seeds until fluffy, 1 more minute. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes.

LAVENDER-EARL GREY CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

10	tablespoons unsalted butter
¼	cup loose Earl Grey tea
1¼	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
½	teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼	teaspoon ground ginger
¼	teaspoon ground allspice
½	cup granulated sugar
½	cup packed light brown sugar
½	cup sour cream
2	large eggs
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE GLAZE

½	cup water
1	tablespoon dried lavender
2	cups confectioners' sugar
Purple food coloring	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Melt the butter with the Earl Grey tea in a small saucepan. Steep over low heat, about 5 minutes. Strain into a bowl.
2. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger and allspice in a medium bowl. Whisk the tea butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the glaze: Bring the water and lavender to a boil; strain. Whisk 2 to 3 tablespoons lavender water into the confectioners' sugar. Mix in the food coloring gradually to tint a lavender color. Spoon the glaze over the cupcakes.

SPICE CUPCAKES WITH SUGARED CRANBERRIES

ACTIVE: 1½ hr | TOTAL: 4 hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE SUGARED CRANBERRIES

24	cranberries (thawed and drained if frozen)
¾	cup sugar
½	cup water

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1¼	cups all-purpose flour
1	tablespoon unsweetened cocoa powder
½	teaspoon ground allspice
¼	teaspoon ground cloves
¼	teaspoon salt
½	cup molasses
½	cup sugar
½	cup vegetable oil
½	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1	teaspoon baking soda
½	cup boiling water
1	large egg, lightly beaten

FOR THE FROSTING

3	large egg whites, at room temperature
1¼	cups sugar
¼	cup water
2	sprigs rosemary
3	sticks unsalted butter, cut into cubes, at room temperature

1. Make the sugared cranberries: Put the cranberries in a medium bowl. Bring ½ cup sugar and the water to a simmer in a small saucepan over medium-high heat; cook, stirring, until the sugar dissolves, about 2 minutes. Pour over the cranberries and let sit 1 hour. Drain the cranberries, then toss with the remaining ¼ cup sugar on a baking sheet. Spread the cranberries in the sugar in a single layer to dry, rolling occasionally to coat well, 2 to 3 hours.

2. Meanwhile, make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, cocoa powder, allspice, cloves and salt in a medium bowl. Whisk the molasses, sugar, vegetable oil and vanilla in a large bowl. Dissolve the baking soda in the boiling water in a liquid measuring cup, then whisk into the molasses mixture. Whisk in the flour mixture, then the egg, until combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, about 22 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the egg whites in a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment on medium-high speed until soft peaks form. Put ¼ cup sugar on a large plate; set aside. Combine the remaining 1 cup sugar, the water and rosemary sprigs in a small saucepan over medium heat; cook, stirring, until the sugar dissolves. Increase the heat to medium high and bring to a boil. Cook until the syrup registers 235° on a candy thermometer, about 5 minutes; remove from the heat. Working quickly, remove the rosemary with tongs and transfer to the plate with the sugar; toss to coat, then set aside.

5. Turn the mixer with the egg whites on high speed and slowly drizzle in the hot rosemary syrup, aiming the syrup between the side of the bowl and the beater. Beat until both the bowl and the mixture are cool to the touch, 12 to 15 minutes. Switch to the paddle attachment and beat in the butter on medium speed, one piece at a time, until the frosting is smooth and thick.

6. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top each with a few candied rosemary needles and 2 sugared cranberries.

Pumpkin Spice cupcakes

PUMPKIN SPICE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 18

FOR THE CUPCAKES

2	sticks unsalted butter, at room temperature
1½	cups granulated sugar
4	large eggs
1	cup pure pumpkin puree
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
2	cups all-purpose flour
2	teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
1	teaspoon baking powder
1	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt

FOR THE FROSTING

1	8-ounce package cream cheese
4	tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
1½	cups confectioners' sugar
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line 18 muffin cups with paper or foil liners. Beat the butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl with a mixer until fluffy. Beat in the eggs, pumpkin puree and vanilla. Sift the flour, pumpkin pie spice, baking powder, baking soda and salt together into a medium bowl. Stir the flour mixture into the pumpkin mixture until just combined.

2. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, about 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

3. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the cream cheese, butter, confectioners' sugar and vanilla with a mixer on medium speed until fluffy, about 3 minutes. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes.

GINGER-MOLASSES CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1¼	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
½	teaspoon ground cinnamon
½	teaspoon ground ginger
¼	teaspoon ground allspice
1	stick unsalted butter, melted
½	cup granulated sugar
⅓	cup molasses
½	cup sour cream
2	large eggs
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING

4	tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
6	ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
½	teaspoon grated peeled fresh ginger
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt	
2	cups confectioners' sugar
Crystallized ginger, for topping	

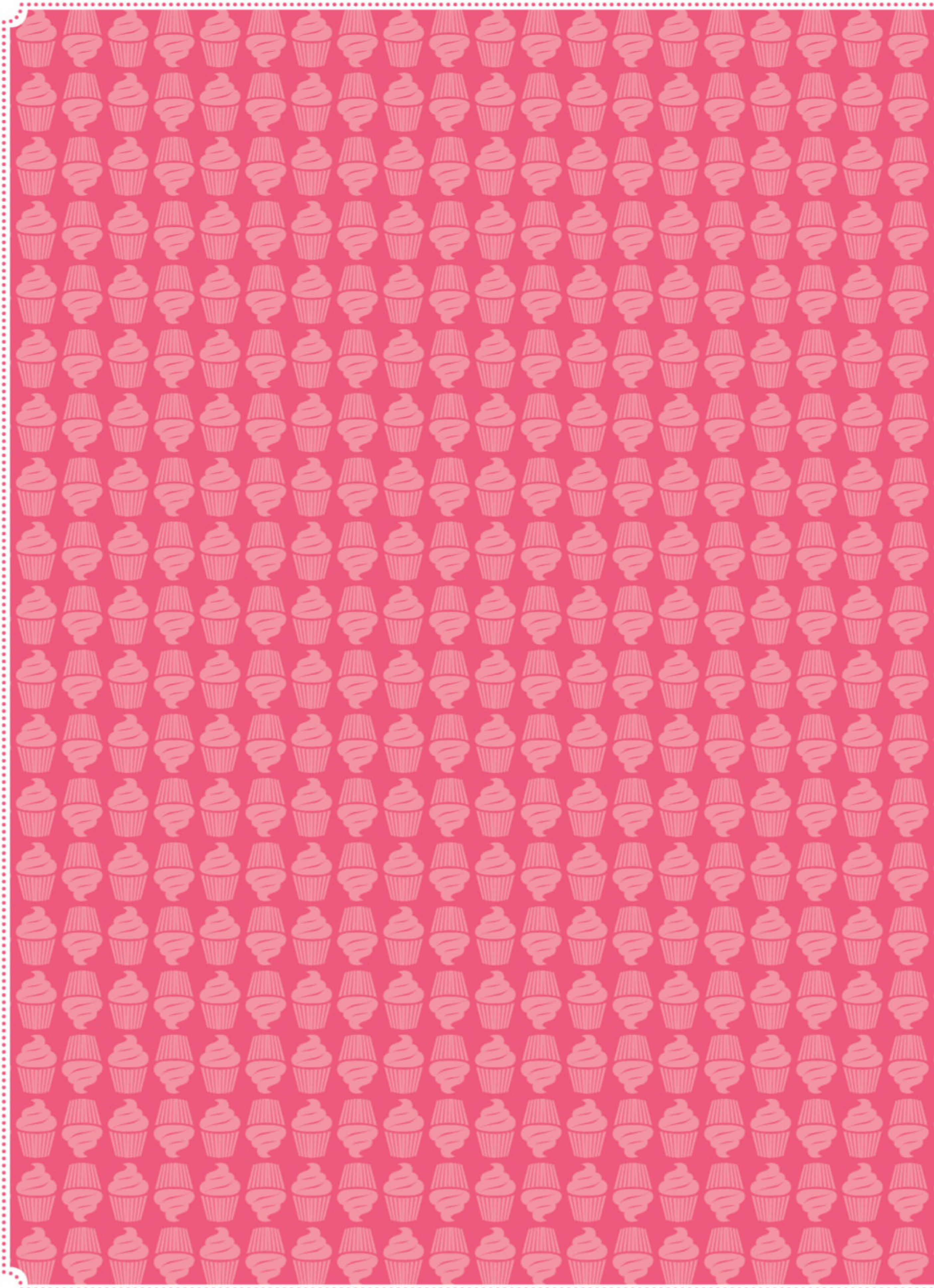
1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger and allspice in a medium bowl.

2. Whisk the melted butter, granulated sugar, molasses, sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, grated ginger, vanilla and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with crystallized ginger.



fruity cupcakes

LEMON CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 teaspoons grated lemon zest
½ cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 tablespoons milk
½ cup lemon curd
Lemon jelly beans, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Add the granulated sugar and beat until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla and lemon zest. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, 1 more minute. Beat in the lemon curd.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with lemon jelly beans.

MOJITO CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 45 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ cup milk

FOR THE GLAZE
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
2 tablespoons white rum
¼ cup fresh mint leaves
¼ cup granulated sugar

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 tablespoons milk
1 tablespoon white rum
1 tablespoon grated lime zest
Turbinado sugar and fresh mint leaves, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Add the granulated sugar and beat until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the glaze: Simmer the lime juice, rum, mint leaves and granulated sugar in a small saucepan over medium heat until the sugar is dissolved; let cool. Brush the glaze on the cupcakes.
5. Make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, about 1 minute. Beat in the rum and lime zest. Spread the frosting on the cupcakes, then roll the edges in turbinado sugar. Top with mint leaves.

CANDIED GRAPEFRUIT CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1½ hr | TOTAL: 2 hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CANDIED ZEST

1	red grapefruit
3	tablespoons elderflower liqueur (such as St-Germain)
½	cup granulated sugar

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1½	cups all-purpose flour
1½	teaspoons baking powder
¼	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs, at room temperature
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1	tablespoon finely grated red grapefruit zest
½	cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING

1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
3	cups confectioners' sugar
2	drops red food coloring (optional)
1	tablespoon finely grated red grapefruit zest, plus segments for topping
2	tablespoons elderflower liqueur (such as St-Germain)

1. Make the candied zest: Remove the grapefruit zest with a vegetable peeler and slice into thin strands. Place in a saucepan; cover with water and bring to a simmer. Drain the zest and return to the saucepan; cover with water and repeat 2 more times. Set the zest aside. Juice the grapefruit into the saucepan, reserving 1 tablespoon for the frosting. Add the liqueur and granulated sugar; bring to a simmer over medium-high heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Add the zest, reduce the heat to low and simmer 20 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon; set aside. Reserve the syrup.

2. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper liners (or use silicone liners). Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

3. Beat the butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 5 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then beat in the vanilla and the grated grapefruit zest. Reduce the speed to medium and add the flour mixture in three additions, alternating with the milk; beat until the batter just comes together.

4. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 18 minutes. Transfer the pan to a rack. Poke a few holes in each cupcake with a toothpick. Reheat the reserved grapefruit syrup; brush generously over the cupcakes (reserve the remaining syrup). Remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

5. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Add the confectioners' sugar, food coloring, grated grapefruit zest, liqueur and the reserved 1 tablespoon grapefruit juice; beat until smooth, about 3 minutes.

6. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Dip grapefruit segments in the remaining grapefruit syrup and place on the cupcakes. Top with the candied zest.

RASPBERRY-ROSE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1½ hr | TOTAL: 2 hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, melted
¾	cup granulated sugar
½	cup sour cream
2	large eggs
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FILLING

2	cups raspberries
1	cup plus 1 tablespoon water
⅔	cup granulated sugar
1½	teaspoons cornstarch
½	teaspoon rosewater

FOR THE FROSTING

1	cup granulated sugar
3	large egg whites
2	sticks unsalted butter, cut into pieces, at room temperature

¾ to 1 teaspoon rosewater

Coarse sugar, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Whisk the melted butter, granulated sugar, sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until smooth.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops of the cupcakes are golden and spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the filling: Combine the raspberries, 1 cup water and the granulated sugar in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until reduced by half, about 15 minutes. Whisk the cornstarch, rosewater and 1 tablespoon water in a small bowl. Add to the raspberries and cook, stirring, until thickened, 2 to 3 minutes. Strain the sauce through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl, pressing on the solids with a rubber spatula. Let cool, about 20 minutes.

5. Make the frosting: Put the granulated sugar and egg whites in the bowl of a stand mixer; set the bowl over a saucepan of simmering water (do not let the bowl touch the water). Whisk until the mixture is warm and the sugar dissolves, 3 to 5 minutes. Transfer the bowl to the stand mixer; beat with the whisk attachment on medium-high speed until stiff glossy peaks form, 6 to 8 minutes. Switch to the paddle attachment. With the mixer on medium-high speed, beat in the butter a few pieces at a time, beating well after each addition. (It's OK if the frosting looks curdled—it will smooth out as you beat.) Continue beating until the frosting is smooth, 1 to 2 more minutes. Add 3 to 4 tablespoons of the raspberry filling and the rosewater and beat until thick and smooth.

6. With a paring knife, cut a ¾-inch-deep slit across the top of each cupcake, nearly edge to edge; gently squeeze the sides of the cupcake so the slit opens. Spoon about 1 teaspoon of the raspberry filling into each cupcake. Let stand 5 minutes, then spoon the remaining filling into the cupcakes.

7. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Sprinkle with coarse sugar.

JELLY DOUGHNUT CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½	cup milk
½	cup seedless raspberry or strawberry jam

FOR THE FROSTING

1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3	cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt	
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2	tablespoons milk
Sanding sugar, for topping	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Add the granulated sugar and beat until creamy, 4 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Fit a pastry bag with a large tip; fill with the jam. Insert into the top of each cupcake and pipe in the jam.

5. Make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Add the vanilla and beat on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, 1 more minute.

6. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Sprinkle with sanding sugar.

STRAWBERRIES-AND-CREAM CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½	cup milk
1	cup strawberries, pureed

FOR THE FROSTING

1	cup heavy cream
⅓	cup confectioners' sugar
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Red sprinkles and sliced strawberries, for topping	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Add the granulated sugar and beat until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk and ¼ cup of the strawberry puree. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Combine the heavy cream, confectioners' sugar, vanilla and the remaining strawberry puree in a large bowl. Beat with a mixer until stiff peaks form.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with red sprinkles and sliced strawberries.

LEMON MERINGUE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1¾	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
¼	teaspoon baking soda
¼	teaspoon salt
2	large eggs
1¾	cups granulated sugar
1	cup whole milk
¾	cup vegetable oil
	Finely grated zest of 2 lemons, plus 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE MERINGUE

2	large egg whites
¼	teaspoon salt
½	cup granulated sugar
½	cup light corn syrup
¼	cup water
¼	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE GLAZE

2½	cups confectioners' sugar
¼	cup fresh lemon juice (from about 2 lemons)
1	tablespoon limoncello (optional)
6 to 7	drops yellow food coloring (optional)

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a bowl until combined.

2. Whisk the eggs, granulated sugar, milk, vegetable oil, lemon zest, lemon juice and vanilla in a large bowl until combined. Whisk in the flour mixture until smooth.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups (they will be very full). Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 15 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the meringue: Beat the egg whites and salt in a bowl with a mixer on medium speed until foamy, 1 minute. Increase the mixer speed to high and gradually beat in 2 tablespoons granulated sugar; beat until stiff shiny peaks form, about 3 minutes.

5. Combine the remaining 6 tablespoons granulated sugar, the corn syrup and water in a saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook until the mixture registers 245° on a candy thermometer, about 6 minutes; remove from the heat. With the mixer on medium speed, slowly pour the hot sugar syrup into the egg whites; increase the speed to high and beat until the meringue is fluffy and cool, about 6 minutes. Beat in the vanilla. Transfer the meringue to a pastry bag fitted with a large round tip and pipe onto the cupcakes. Set the cupcakes aside at room temperature to firm up, about 15 minutes.

6. Meanwhile, make the glaze: Whisk the confectioners' sugar, lemon juice, limoncello and food coloring in a microwave-safe bowl until smooth. Microwave 1 minute, then whisk again until the sugar dissolves; let cool about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Dip the meringue-topped cupcakes into the glaze, letting the excess drip off. If the glaze gets too thick, microwave 20 seconds.

ORANGE CREAM CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1½	cups all-purpose flour
1½	teaspoons baking powder
¼	teaspoon salt
2	large eggs, at room temperature
⅔	cup granulated sugar
1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, melted
2	teaspoons finely grated orange zest
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½	cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING

¾	cup fresh orange juice (from about 2 oranges)
1	8-ounce package cream cheese, at room temperature
10	tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces, at room temperature
1	cup confectioners' sugar
½	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
2	teaspoons finely grated orange zest
3	drops yellow food coloring (optional)
1	drop red food coloring (optional)
	Candied orange zest, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper liners (or use silicone liners). Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the eggs and granulated sugar in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until pale and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Reduce the speed to medium low; slowly beat in the melted butter, then add the orange zest and vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in two additions, alternating with the milk; beat until just combined (do not overmix).

3. Divide the batter evenly among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, about 18 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Bring the orange juice to a boil in a saucepan; reduce the heat to medium and simmer until reduced to 1½ tablespoons, about 8 minutes. Let cool.

5. Beat the cream cheese in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth and fluffy. Beat in the butter, a little at a time, until smooth. Reduce the mixer speed to low; sift the confectioners' sugar into the bowl and beat until smooth. Add the vanilla, the cooled orange syrup, orange zest and food coloring; beat on medium speed until combined. Refrigerate until spreadable, about 15 minutes.

6. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with candied orange zest.

Orange Cream cupcakes

CHOCOLATE-STRAWBERRY CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	cup all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon salt
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1	teaspoon instant espresso powder
¾	cup whole milk
1	cup granulated sugar
¾	cup vegetable oil
1	large egg
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
¼	cup strawberry preserves or jelly
1	teaspoon fresh lemon juice

FOR THE STRAWBERRIES AND FROSTING

6	ounces semisweet chocolate, finely chopped
12	medium strawberries
2	ounces white chocolate, finely chopped
1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
2	pinches salt
2	cups confectioners' sugar
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2	tablespoons whole milk

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350˚. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, salt and baking soda in a medium bowl. Combine the cocoa powder and espresso powder in a large bowl.

2. Heat the milk in a saucepan over medium heat until hot but not simmering. Pour over the cocoa mixture and whisk until smooth; let cool a few minutes. Whisk in the granulated sugar until dissolved. Whisk in the vegetable oil, egg and vanilla, then the flour mixture.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, about 20 minutes. Transfer the pan to a rack. Stir the strawberry preserves with the lemon juice. Brush on the warm cupcakes. Let cool in the pan 5 minutes, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the chocolate-dipped strawberries: Microwave 4 ounces semisweet chocolate in a bowl in 30-second intervals, stirring, until melted. Dip the strawberries in the chocolate; place on a plate. Let set, 20 to 30 minutes.

5. Make the frosting: Microwave the white chocolate and remaining 2 ounces semisweet chocolate in separate bowls in 30-second intervals, stirring, until melted; let cool. Beat 6 tablespoons butter and a pinch of salt in a bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth. Beat in the melted white chocolate. Add 1 cup confectioners' sugar; beat until fluffy, 3 minutes. Beat in 1 teaspoon vanilla and 1 tablespoon milk. Set the white chocolate frosting aside. Repeat this step with the semisweet chocolate to make a semisweet chocolate frosting.

6. Spoon the two frostings side by side into a piping bag fitted with a large round tip. Pipe the swirled frosting onto the cupcakes. Top each with a chocolate-dipped strawberry.

PB&J CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1 hr 15 min | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
¾ cup milk
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 cup granulated sugar
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
¼ cup strawberry jelly

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
¾ cup creamy peanut butter
3 cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2 tablespoons milk
¼ cup strawberry jelly, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely. Brush each cupcake with 1 teaspoon strawberry jelly.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, peanut butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, 1 more minute.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Spoon or pipe 1 teaspoon strawberry jelly on top of each cupcake.

DOUBLE APPLE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
¼ teaspoon ground ginger
¼ teaspoon ground allspice
1 stick unsalted butter, melted
½ cup granulated sugar
½ cup packed light brown sugar
½ cup sour cream
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 green apple, peeled and grated

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon apple pie spice, plus more for topping
2 tablespoons milk
Dried apple pieces, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon, ginger and allspice in a medium bowl.
2. Whisk the melted butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined. Fold in the grated apple.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla and apple pie spice on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk until fluffy, 1 more minute.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with dried apple pieces and sprinkle with more pie spice.

CHERRY-ALMOND CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1⅓ cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
¼ teaspoon pure almond extract
½ cup milk
⅓ cup chopped maraschino cherries

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½ teaspoon pure almond extract
3 tablespoons maraschino cherry juice (from the jar)
12 whole maraschino cherries, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl.
2. Beat the butter in a separate large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Add the granulated sugar and beat until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla and almond extracts. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined. Fold in the chopped cherries.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla and almond extracts on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the cherry juice until fluffy, 1 more minute.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with the whole cherries.

CRANBERRY CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1½ cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon baking soda
⅛ to ¼ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
6 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
¾ cup granulated sugar
1 large egg, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½ cup sour cream
½ cup canned whole-berry cranberry sauce

FOR THE FROSTING
2 sticks unsalted butter, at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
¼ cup canned whole-berry cranberry sauce
½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt
Dried cranberries, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, salt, baking soda and nutmeg in a medium bowl.
2. Beat the butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, about 2 minutes. Add the egg and vanilla and beat until fluffy, about 3 more minutes. Reduce the speed to low and beat in the flour mixture, about 1 minute. Add the sour cream and beat until light and fluffy, about 2 more minutes.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, about 22 minutes. Transfer the pan to a rack and let sit until cool enough to handle, then gently press the back of a small spoon into the center of each cupcake to make an indentation. Fill each indentation with a few teaspoons of cranberry sauce. Remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter and 1 cup confectioners' sugar in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until combined, about 2 minutes. Reduce the mixer speed to medium low; gradually add the remaining 2 cups confectioners' sugar and beat until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Increase the speed to medium high; beat in the cranberry sauce, vanilla and salt.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with dried cranberries.

STRAWBERRY YOGURT CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1½	cups all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking powder
¼	teaspoon baking soda
¼	teaspoon salt
1	6-ounce container strawberry yogurt
½	cup granulated sugar
1	stick unsalted butter, melted
2	large eggs
¼	cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING

8	ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
¼	cup strawberry yogurt
2	cups confectioners' sugar

Sliced strawberries, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.

2. In a large bowl, whisk the strawberry yogurt, granulated sugar, melted butter and eggs until smooth. Mix in the flour mixture in two batches, alternating with the milk.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, about 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the cream cheese and the strawberry yogurt in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until smooth. Beat in the confectioners' sugar. Refrigerate the frosting until firm, about 15 minutes.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with sliced strawberries.

PIÑA COLADA CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1½	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
1½	teaspoons salt
2	large eggs
¾	cup plus 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
¼	cup packed light brown sugar
½	cup canned unsweetened coconut milk
½	cup vegetable oil (or ¼ cup each vegetable oil and coconut oil)
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1	teaspoon coconut extract
1	tablespoon dark rum
1	tablespoon fresh lime juice

FOR THE FROSTING

1	cup pineapple juice
1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3	cups confectioners' sugar
	Pinch of salt
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1	teaspoon coconut extract
1	tablespoon dark rum
1	cup sweetened shredded coconut
	Maraschino cherries, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Whisk the eggs, ¾ cup granulated sugar, the brown sugar, coconut milk, vegetable oil and vanilla and coconut extracts in a large bowl. Whisk in the flour mixture until smooth.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops of the cupcakes are golden and spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer the pan to a rack and poke the cupcakes all over with a toothpick.

4. Combine the rum, lime juice and remaining 1 tablespoon granulated sugar in a small saucepan over medium heat. Bring to a simmer and cook, stirring, until the sugar dissolves. Brush the rum syrup on the warm cupcakes. Let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

5. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Bring the pineapple juice to a boil in a small saucepan. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until syrupy and reduced to 2 to 3 tablespoons, 6 to 8 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl and refrigerate until completely cool.

6. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until creamy, about 1 minute. Reduce the mixer speed to low and beat in the confectioners' sugar and salt. Increase the speed to medium high and beat until light and fluffy, 3 minutes. Beat in the vanilla and coconut extracts for 1 minute, then beat in the rum and reduced pineapple juice.

7. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Sprinkle with the shredded coconut and top with maraschino cherries.

ORANGE–OLIVE OIL CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 35 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
½	cup olive oil
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
1	teaspoon grated orange zest
½	cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING

1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3	cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt	
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2	tablespoons milk
⅓	cup orange marmalade
Candied orange zest, for topping	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the olive oil and granulated sugar in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla and orange zest. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the milk and orange marmalade until fluffy, 1 more minute.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with candied orange zest.

LEMON-RASPBERRY CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 40 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1⅓	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
1	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
½	cup seedless raspberry jam
2	teaspoons grated lemon zest
½	cup milk

FOR THE FROSTING

1½	sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3	cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt	
2	teaspoons pure vanilla extract
2	tablespoons seedless raspberry jam
Raspberries, for topping	

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Add the granulated sugar and beat until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then the vanilla, raspberry jam and lemon zest. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with the milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the raspberry jam until fluffy, 1 more minute.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with raspberries.

JUMBO STRAWBERRY SURPRISE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 45 min | TOTAL: 1 hr 15 min | MAKES: 6

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1½	cups all-purpose flour
1½	teaspoons baking powder
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
¾	cup granulated sugar
2	large eggs, at room temperature
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
½	cup strawberry-flavored milk, at room temperature
6	strawberries, hulled

FOR THE FROSTING

2	cups confectioners' sugar
½	cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1	stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
½	cup heavy cream
3	strawberries, hulled and halved

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 6-cup jumbo muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl.

2. Beat the butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Beat in the eggs, one at a time, then beat in the vanilla. Reduce the mixer speed to low and beat in the flour mixture in three batches, alternating with the strawberry milk, until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 25 to 30 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Using a paring knife, cut a cone-shaped piece of cake out of the top of each cupcake (about the same size as the strawberries), stopping about ½ inch from the bottom. Stuff with the strawberries, then cover with a small piece of the removed cake.

5. Make the frosting: Sift the confectioners' sugar and cocoa powder into a medium bowl. Transfer half of the sugar-cocoa mixture to a large bowl; beat in the butter and ¼ cup heavy cream with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth. Beat in the remaining sugar-cocoa mixture and ¼ cup heavy cream until fluffy.

6. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with the strawberry halves.

APPLE PIE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1 hr 20 min | MAKES: 12

FOR THE FILLING

1	tablespoon unsalted butter
2	Golden Delicious apples, peeled and diced
2	tablespoons packed light brown sugar
1	tablespoon all-purpose flour
1	tablespoon bourbon (or water)
1	tablespoon water, plus more if needed
½	teaspoon ground cinnamon

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1¼	cups all-purpose flour
1	teaspoon ground cinnamon
½	teaspoon baking powder
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
1	stick unsalted butter, melted
½	cup granulated sugar
½	cup packed light brown sugar
½	cup sour cream
2	large eggs
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE LATTICE CRUSTS AND FROSTING

1	sheet refrigerated pie dough
1	large egg, lightly beaten
1	tablespoon coarse sugar
1	cup heavy cream
½	cup sour cream
½	cup confectioners' sugar

1. Make the filling: Melt the butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Stir in the apples, brown sugar, flour, bourbon, water and cinnamon. Cover and cook, stirring often, until the apples are soft and the sauce is thick, about 10 minutes. (Add a splash more water if the apples are sticking.)

2. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl. Whisk the melted butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl. Add the flour mixture and whisk until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake 12 minutes and remove from the oven. Drop 1 tablespoon of the apple filling on top of each cupcake, then continue baking until the cupcakes are golden around the edges, about 8 more minutes (it's OK if they still look a bit wet). Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the lattice crusts: Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Unroll the pie dough on a cutting board. Cut into ¼- to ½-inch strips and arrange in a lattice pattern. Cut out twelve 2-inch rounds from the lattice using a cookie cutter; place on the prepared baking sheet. Brush with the beaten egg and sprinkle with the coarse sugar. Bake until golden, about 15 minutes. Let cool completely on the baking sheet.

5. Make the frosting: Combine the heavy cream, sour cream and confectioners' sugar in a large bowl. Beat with a mixer on medium-high speed until stiff peaks form, 4 minutes.

6. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top each cupcake with a lattice crust.

Apple Pie cupcakes

KEY LIME CUPCAKES ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE LIME CURD
½ cup granulated sugar
1 large egg plus 1 egg yolk
¼ cup fresh Key lime juice (from about 8 Key limes)
2 teaspoons cornstarch
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into pieces
1 teaspoon grated Key lime zest (from about 2 Key limes)
Pinch of salt

FOR THE CUPCAKES
12 chocolate wafer cookies
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
1¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
¼ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon salt
¾ cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
1 teaspoon grated Key lime zest
2 tablespoons fresh Key lime juice (from about 4 Key limes)
⅓ cup buttermilk

FOR THE FROSTING
1 stick unsalted butter, at room temperature
3¼ cups confectioners' sugar
¼ cup sour cream
1 tablespoon fresh Key lime juice
Pinch of salt
Key lime slices and grated zest, for topping

1. Make the lime curd: Combine the granulated sugar, egg and egg yolk, lime juice and cornstarch in a small saucepan. Cook over medium-low heat, whisking, until thick enough to coat a spoon, 8 to 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and whisk in the butter, a little at a time, until smooth. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl, then stir in the lime zest and salt. Set in a larger bowl of ice and stir until the curd is completely cool. Press plastic wrap directly onto the surface; refrigerate until using.
2. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper liners (or use silicone liners). Pulse the wafer cookies in a food processor until finely ground. Melt 2 tablespoons butter; add to the processor and pulse until the mixture comes together. Press about 1 tablespoon crumbs into each muffin cup.
3. Sift the flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt into a medium bowl; set aside. Combine the remaining 10 tablespoons butter and the granulated sugar in a large bowl and beat with a mixer on medium-high speed until fluffy, 5 minutes. Reduce the speed to low; beat in the eggs, one at a time. Beat in the vanilla, lime zest and juice until well combined. Beat in the flour mixture in three additions, alternating with the buttermilk. Increase the speed to medium high and mix until combined.
4. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 20 to 22 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
5. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until fluffy, 5 minutes. Reduce the speed to low and beat in the confectioners' sugar. Increase the speed to medium high; add the sour cream, lime juice and salt and beat until fluffy, 2 more minutes.
6. Place the lime curd in a pastry bag fitted with a ¼-inch tip. Insert the tip into the center of each cupcake and squeeze to fill. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes, then pipe more lime curd on top. Top with lime slices and zest.

PASSION FRUIT CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1 cup all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
¾ cup milk
½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 cup granulated sugar
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 large egg
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

FOR THE FROSTING
1½ sticks (12 tablespoons) unsalted butter, at room temperature
3 cups confectioners' sugar
Pinch of salt
2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
¼ cup frozen passion fruit pulp, thawed
Yellow food coloring
Yellow sanding sugar, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat until hot but not boiling. Pour the milk over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, confectioners' sugar and salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Beat in the vanilla on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in the passion fruit pulp until fluffy, 1 more minute. Tint with the yellow food coloring.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Sprinkle with yellow sanding sugar.

HUMMINGBIRD CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES
1¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 stick unsalted butter, melted
½ cup granulated sugar
½ cup packed light brown sugar
½ cup sour cream
2 large eggs
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
⅓ cup pecans, chopped
⅓ cup chopped bananas
⅓ cup chopped dried pineapple

FOR THE FROSTING
4 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature
6 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
Pinch of salt
2 cups confectioners' sugar
Chopped pecans and chopped dried pineapple, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt and cinnamon in a medium bowl.
2. Whisk the melted butter, granulated sugar, brown sugar, sour cream, eggs and vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined. Fold in the pecans, bananas and pineapple.
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 18 to 20 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Beat the butter, cream cheese, vanilla and salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in the confectioners' sugar on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium-high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes.
5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with chopped pecans and dried pineapple.

COCONUT-PINEAPPLE CUPCAKES

ACTIVE: 30 min | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1	cup all-purpose flour
½	teaspoon baking soda
½	teaspoon salt
¾	cup milk
½	cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1	cup granulated sugar
¾	cup vegetable oil
1	large egg
¼	cup rum
1	teaspoon pure vanilla extract
¼	cup pineapple preserves

FOR THE FROSTING

1	5.4-ounce can (about ½ cup) unsweetened coconut cream
1	cup heavy cream
½	cup confectioners' sugar

Toasted shredded coconut and chopped pineapple, for topping

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners. Whisk the flour, baking soda and salt in a medium bowl.

2. Heat the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat until hot but not boiling. Pour over the cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in the granulated sugar, vegetable oil, egg, rum and vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back when pressed, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely. Brush the cooled cupcakes with the pineapple preserves.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Combine the coconut cream, heavy cream and confectioners' sugar in a large bowl. Beat with a mixer on medium speed until soft peaks form.

5. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with toasted coconut and chopped pineapple.

TRIPLE LEMON CUPCAKES ▶

ACTIVE: 1 hr | TOTAL: 1½ hr | MAKES: 12

FOR THE CUPCAKES

1¼	cups all-purpose flour
¼	cup sliced almonds
¾	teaspoon baking powder
¼	teaspoon baking soda
¼	teaspoon salt
2	large eggs
1	cup sugar
½	cup buttermilk
½	cup vegetable oil
1	tablespoon finely grated lemon zest, plus 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

FOR THE FROSTING

⅔	cup plus ¼ cup sugar
¼	cup water
3	large egg whites, at room temperature
2	sticks unsalted butter, cut into pieces, at room temperature
4	drops yellow food coloring (optional)
1	tablespoon finely grated lemon zest
¼	cup fresh lemon juice (from about 2 lemons)

FOR THE CANDIED ZEST

4	lemons
¾	cup sugar

1. Make the cupcakes: Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper liners (or use silicone liners). Combine the flour and almonds in a food processor and pulse until the almonds are finely ground, about 1 minute. Add the baking powder, baking soda and salt; pulse to combine.

2. Whisk the eggs, sugar, buttermilk, vegetable oil and lemon zest and juice in a large bowl. Add the flour mixture and whisk until just combined.

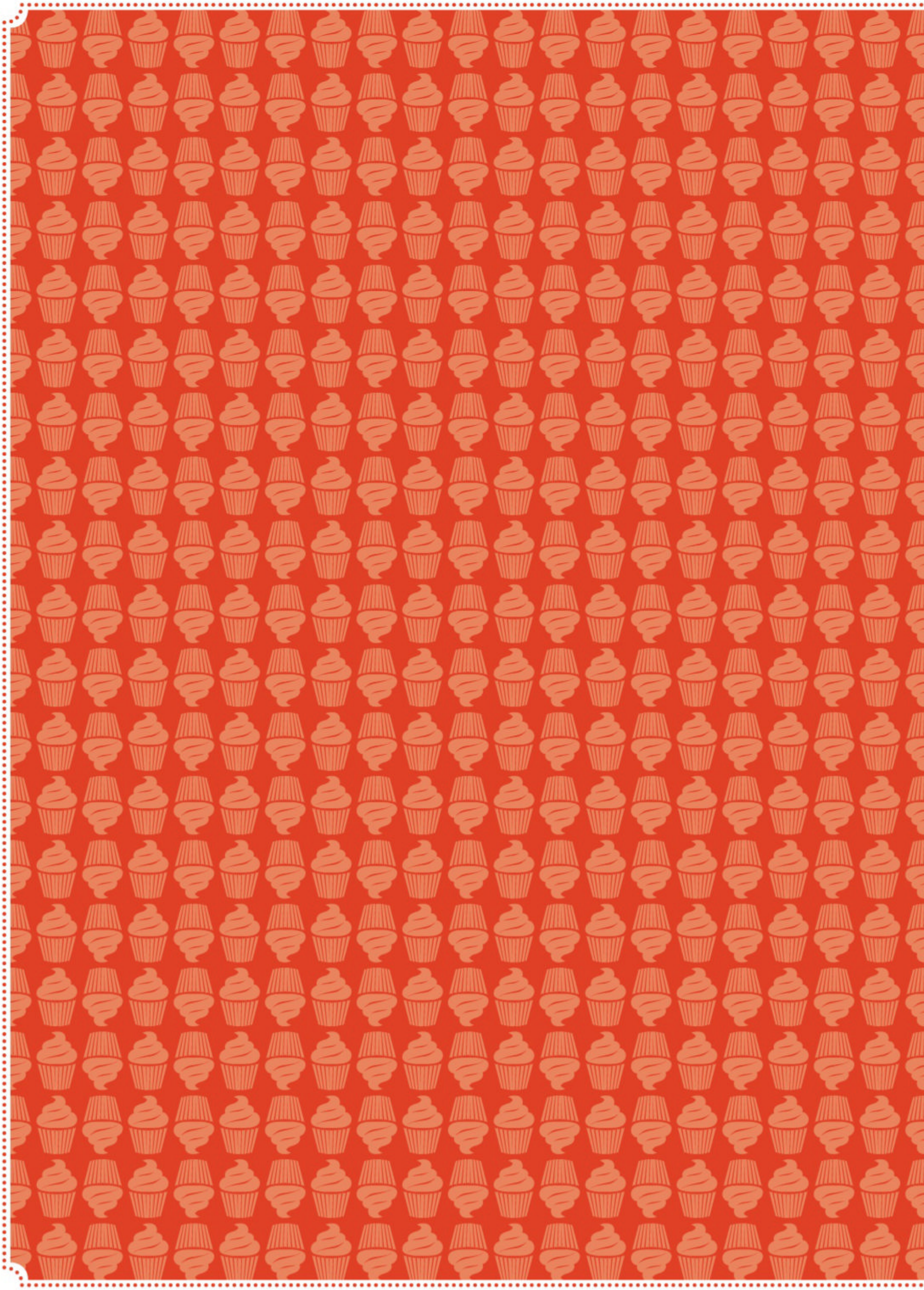
3. Divide the batter among the prepared muffin cups. Bake until a toothpick inserted into the centers comes out clean, 16 to 18 minutes. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.

4. Meanwhile, make the frosting: Combine ⅔ cup sugar and the water in a small saucepan. Cook over medium-high heat until a candy thermometer registers 240°, about 12 minutes. Beat the egg whites in a large bowl with a mixer on medium speed until foamy; increase the speed to medium high and beat until soft peaks form, 2 minutes. Sprinkle in the remaining ¼ cup sugar and beat until stiff peaks form, 3 minutes. With the mixer running, slowly pour in the sugar syrup and beat until cool and glossy, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the butter a little at a time, beating until incorporated. (It's OK if the mixture looks curdled at first; continue beating.) Beat in the food coloring, then add the lemon zest and juice and beat until smooth, 2 more minutes.

5. Make the candied zest: Remove the lemon zest with a vegetable peeler and slice into thin strands. Place in a small saucepan, cover with water and bring to a simmer over high heat. Drain the zest and return it to the saucepan; cover with water and repeat 2 more times. Bring the sugar and water to a bare simmer in a separate saucepan, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Add the lemon zest strands and cook over low heat, 20 minutes. Drain the zest and arrange in clusters on a parchment-lined baking sheet; let dry.

6. Spread or pipe the frosting on the cupcakes. Top with the candied lemon zest.

Triple Lemon cupcakes



cupcake basics

Basic Cupcakes

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Line a 12-cup muffin pan with paper or foil liners.
2. Make your batter; divide among the muffin cups. Bake until the tops spring back, 20 to 25 minutes for vanilla, chocolate or red velvet cupcakes, and 18 to 20 minutes for spice cupcakes.
3. Transfer to a rack and let cool 5 minutes in the pan, then remove the cupcakes to the rack to cool completely.
4. Make your frosting (see next page), then spread or pipe on top of the cupcakes.

VANILLA

Whisk 1⅓ cups flour, 1 teaspoon baking powder and ½ teaspoon salt in a medium bowl. Beat 1 stick softened butter in a large bowl with a mixer on medium-high speed until smooth, 1 minute. Beat in 1 cup sugar until creamy, 4 more minutes. Beat in 2 eggs, one at a time, then 2 teaspoons vanilla. Beat in the flour mixture in three batches on low speed, alternating with ½ cup milk. Beat on medium-high speed until just combined.

CHOCOLATE

Whisk 1 cup flour and ½ teaspoon each baking soda and salt in a medium bowl. Heat ¾ cup milk until hot but not boiling; pour over ½ cup unsweetened cocoa powder in a large bowl and whisk until smooth. Let cool slightly. Whisk in 1 cup sugar, ¾ cup vegetable oil, 1 egg and 1 teaspoon vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

RED VELVET

Whisk 1 cup flour, 2 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder, ½ teaspoon baking soda and ¼ teaspoon salt in a medium bowl. Whisk ½ cup vegetable oil, ½ cup milk and 1 egg in a large bowl; whisk in ¾ cup sugar, 1 tablespoon each white vinegar and red food coloring and 1 teaspoon vanilla until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

SPICE

Whisk 1¼ cups flour, ½ teaspoon each baking powder, baking soda, salt and ground cinnamon and ¼ teaspoon each ground ginger and allspice in a medium bowl. Whisk 1 stick melted butter, ½ cup each granulated sugar, light brown sugar and sour cream, 2 eggs and 1 teaspoon vanilla in a large bowl until smooth. Whisk in the flour mixture until just combined.

Bake a Better Cupcake

- Use room-temperature butter: Cut it into pieces and let sit 1 hour, or microwave in 5-second intervals.
- Measure flour by spooning it into a measuring cup and then leveling it with a knife. Do not pack the flour.
- Check the expiration dates on your baking soda and baking powder. To test for freshness, add a pinch to vinegar; it should bubble.
- Use nonstick liners for batters with mix-ins like chocolate chips. The chips can stick to regular paper liners.
- Use an ice cream scoop to divide batter evenly among muffin cups. Each cup should be no more than two-thirds full.
- Let cupcakes cool 5 minutes in the pans, then remove to a rack. If the cupcakes are left in the pans, they might dry out.

Make-Ahead Tips

- You can bake most cupcakes up to 2 days ahead; arrange them (unfrosted) on a baking sheet, wrap the whole sheet with plastic wrap and store at room temperature. Frost before serving.
- To freeze, arrange unfrosted cupcakes on a baking sheet and wrap the whole sheet in plastic wrap, then in foil. Freeze up to 3 months. Thaw at room temperature before unwrapping.

Basic Frostings

VANILLA

Beat 1½ sticks softened butter, 3 cups confectioners' sugar and a pinch of salt with a mixer on medium speed until just combined. Add 2 teaspoons vanilla and beat on medium-high speed until creamy, 3 minutes. Beat in 2 tablespoons milk until fluffy, 1 more minute.

CREAM CHEESE

Beat ½ stick softened butter, 6 ounces softened cream cheese, 1 teaspoon vanilla and a pinch of salt with a mixer on medium speed until creamy, 1 to 2 minutes. Gradually beat in 2 cups confectioners' sugar on medium-low speed until smooth, then beat on medium high until thick and fluffy, 1 to 2 more minutes.

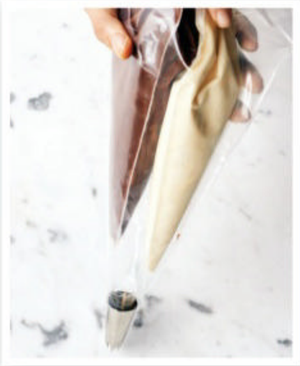
CHOCOLATE

Pulse 1 stick softened butter, 2 cups confectioners' sugar, 4 ounces melted semisweet chocolate, 2 tablespoons each unsweetened cocoa powder and milk and 1 teaspoon vanilla in a food processor until smooth.

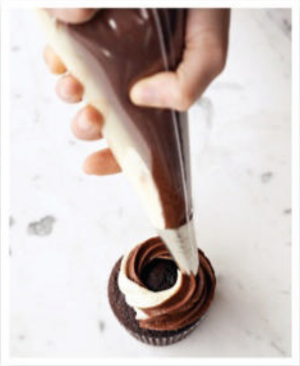
Add a Surprise Filling

Fill a pastry bag with jam, custard or caramel and squeeze into the top of cooled cupcakes before adding frosting.

How to Swirl Frosting



1. Put 2 frostings in separate pastry bags (or resealable plastic bags). Snip off the tips. Position side by side in a larger pastry bag fitted with a large tip.

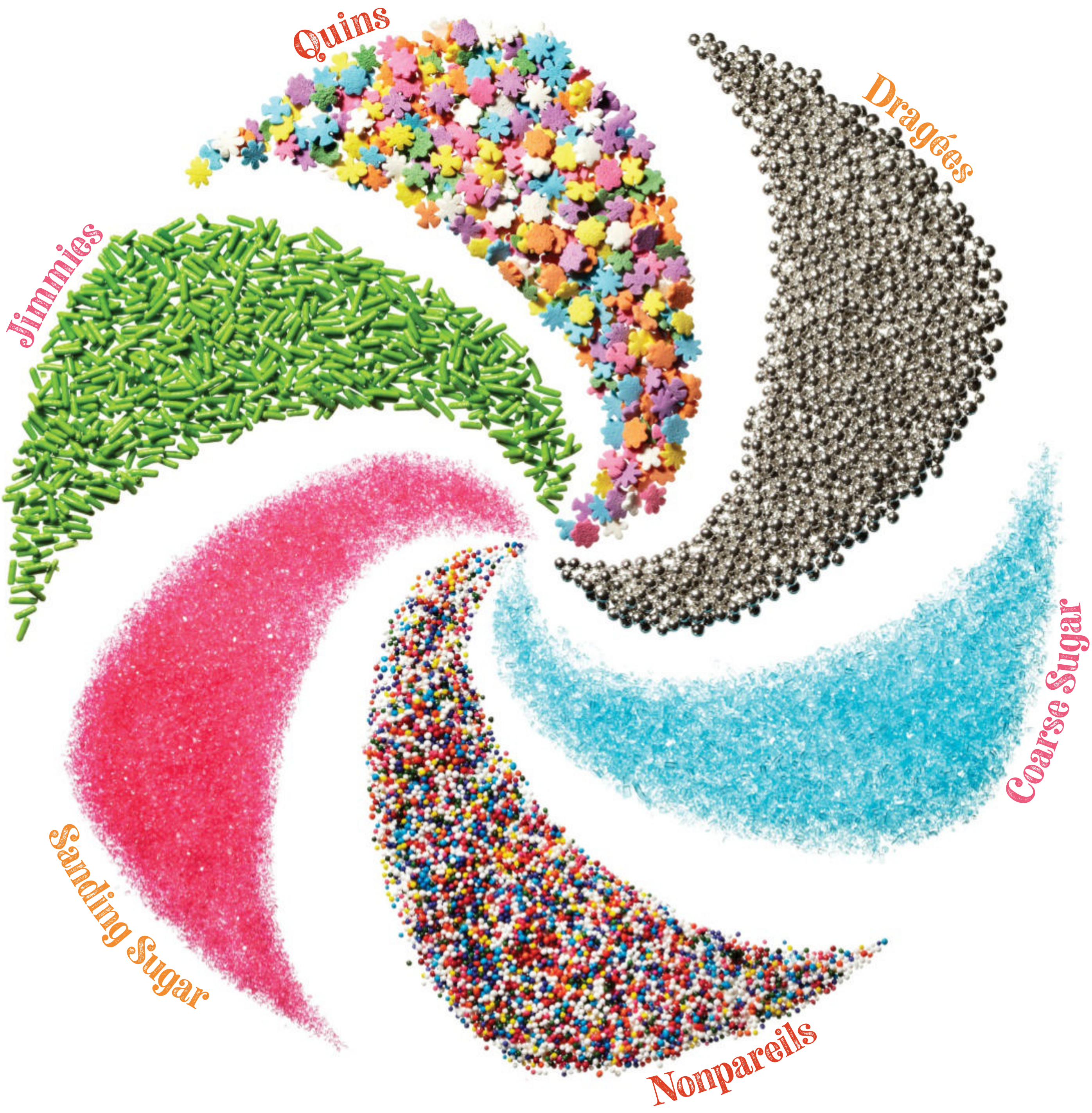


2. Pipe the frosting onto the cupcakes in a spiral motion to create a swirl.

Decorating Tips

- Spread frosting on cupcakes right after you mix it; frosting can start to harden as it sits.
- To tint frosting, use gel food coloring—it's more concentrated than liquid, so you can use less (and it won't thin your frosting).
- Use disposable pastry bags or resealable plastic bags for piping. You don't need a tip—just snip the corner.
- To make peaks and swoops in frosting, use an offset spatula or the back of a spoon.

Know Your Sprinkles


Quins
Dragées
Jimmies
Coarse Sugar
Sanding Sugar
Nonpareils

QUINS	DRAGÉES	COARSE SUGAR	NONPAREILS	SANDING SUGAR	JIMMIES
You can buy these decorative sugar pieces in tons of seasonal shapes.	These metallic balls can range in size from 2 to 10 millimeters.	The grains are larger than sanding sugar, so they add a nice crunch.	These tiny spheres are also called hundreds and thousands.	This super-sparkly topping is slightly coarser than granulated sugar.	The classic version is rainbow, but you can order them online in many colors.

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